UB Ed.D. Dissertation Template with Embedded Prompts

Assembled by Linda S. Paslov, Ed.D.

TRANSFORMING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP:

A CASE STUDY OF THEORY IN ACTION

Francis Thompson
B. A. Marist College, 1991
MAT. Quinnipiac University, 2001

Chair

Linda S. Paslov, Ed.D.

Reader

Jennifer Sinal-Swinger, Ed.D.

Director, Education Leadership Doctoral Program

Joanna Badara, Ph.D.

Director, School of Education

Linda S. Paslov, Ed.D.

DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION IN
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT

BRIDGEPORT CONNECTICUT
2020

TRANSFORMING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP:

A CASE STUDY OF THEORY IN ACTION

A Dissertation Presented

by

Francis Thompson

Submitted to the School of Education

University of Bridgeport

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

October 2020

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

TRANSFORMING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP:

A CASE STUDY OF THEORY IN ACTION

University of Bridgeport

Committee Approval of a Dissertation

Submitted by:

Francis Thompson

I have read this dissertation and have found it to be of satisfactory quality for a doctoral degree.

November 14, 2020
Date

Linda S. Paslov
Linda S. Paslov, Ed.D.
Chair, Dissertation Committee

I have read this dissertation and have found it to be of satisfactory quality for a doctoral degree.

November 16, 2020
Date

Joanna Badara, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

I have read this dissertation and have found it to be of satisfactory quality for a doctoral degree.

December 5, 2020
Date

Jennifer Sinal-Swinger, Ed.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

I have read this dissertation and have found it to be of satisfactory quality for a doctoral degree.

12/5/2020
Date

Khaled Elleithy
Khaled Elleithy, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Engineering, Business, and Education

TRANSFORMING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP:

A CASE STUDY OF THEORY IN ACTION

BY
FRANCIS THOMPSON

ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT
October 2020

Dissertation Supervisor:
Dr. Linda S. Paslov, Director of the School of Education

ABSTRACT

Transitioning to a distributed leadership model is a process that requires a clear and transparent rationale for the shift, empowering new stakeholders while supporting current leadership and working to create a shared vision of the organizational model. The purpose of this single-case study at a suburban northeastern high school is to investigate the perceived relationship between distributed leadership and increased teacher efficacy resulting in changes to instructional practices in schools. This case study examines the ten department chairs (DC) and their role as an instructional leader as a conduit towards expanding the instructional capacity of teachers, both departmentally and collectively.

The study employs a qualitative, constructivist research design to explore their transformational journey to a distributed leadership model using a retrospective review of the emergence of the school's distributed leadership model over the past five years. The collection of the data includes a detailed survey—comprising open ended questions—and a review of existing documents such as accreditation reports, minutes of leadership team meetings, commissioned coherence and capacity program reviews, and state-published data.

Evidence suggests the evolution of this role in a distributed leadership model has allowed these teachers to evolve as leaders. However, many were still working on finding the best balance between teacher and teacher-leader. Common threads to the recommendations stemming from this study are: determining if the conditions in your

organization (school or district) are favorable for a distributed leadership model; creating a collaborative team that shares in the development of a strategic and common vision; creating a trusting environment where leaders can take risks in a culture that values innovation and the building of capacity of the staff. The timespan and the continuing evolution of this model may be reflected in the responses given by the study participants.

Keywords: Distributed leadership, Trust, Shared purpose, Accountability, Efficacy

DEDICATION

My thanks to all those who supported me during this process are too great to include on this page. I dedicate this work in three parts:

First, this dissertation is dedicated to my dear friend and colleague, Dr. Ralph Barbiero. Thank you for welcoming me and reminding me that the focus is always on every student, every day.

Second, this work is dedicated to all the students, every semester, in my English 101: Composition classes. Your commitment to learning, even on Saturdays, while balancing family, work, and life, was my inspiration to begin this journey. We did it! Lastly, and most importantly, to my incredibly supportive family and friends. To my mom and dad—making education a priority for us was the fuel that propelled me to work towards this moment.

To Bobo—I'll be home a lot more now. Let's play!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the faculty members on the dissertation committee for their tireless efforts, time and dedication. Dr. Linda Paslov, committee chair, thank you for your patience, feedback, and understanding of the principal's work—in all its forms; Dr. Joanna Badara, for her expertise in methodology and for her support in making my thinking better; Dr. Jennifer Sinal-Swingler, for her time and talents (and coffee) in discussing the practical implications of our work.

I want to thank my sisters, brother, nieces, nephew, and good friends for your encouragement and support all along the way.

I also wish to acknowledge my many colleagues who have helped me learn and grow personally and professionally.

And thank you, God, for blessing me with the opportunity to take this journey!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The concept of the principal as a building manager has given way to a model where the principal is called to be an inspirational leader, a team builder, a coach, and a visionary agent of change (Alvoid & Black, 2014). The standards and accountability movement has placed extraordinary demands on schools to improve instructional outcomes. Principals are increasingly turning to teacher-leaders to work with colleagues in such roles as instructional coach, lead teacher, mentor, coordinator, and data analyst to meet these demands (Ash & Persall, 2000; Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Reich, 2017).

However, a traditional, top-down directional, leadership mindset is still prevalent in many schools (Copland, 2001; Grubb & Flessa, 2006). This organizational system centers on the principal as the pre-eminent leader of the school. This empowerment gives a significant amount of control, authority, and autonomy to the position, including decision making relative to the entire school operation. In this paradigm, school administrators often own the essential organizational and instructional knowledge and provide it to faculty and staff only when there is no other choice, often in order to preserve their own perceived power or to maintain the status quo. In this traditional model, school administrators and principals will choose not to share vital knowledge with their peers, faculty, or staff members, which drastically impedes school improvement and creates an apprehensive and static environment.

This traditional organizational system relegates middle-level managers (i.e., department chairs) to tasks and transactional duties, denying their powerful and direct

input at the leadership table. Many well-intended principals find themselves too often spending most of their time on merely managing the building, rather than leading on issues of teaching and learning. In all too many schools, teachers are isolated and without opportunities to solve problems collaboratively (Ash & Persall, 2000). Unfortunately, few schools see this paradigm as an opportunity to reflect on and reimagine the term "leadership" and its impact on an organization, such as all work to increase student achievement in this fast-paced era of continual change. Usually, the new roles are just appended to a flat, compartmentalized school structure in which classroom teachers continue to work alone (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

Background of the Study

The top-down approaches to leadership and the internal school structures offer significant impediments to changing this traditional model to an approach where leadership is shared, or distributed, among teachers, who lead in the shared vision of the school and support their colleagues in a collaborative approach to improving instructional efficacy among the collective organization. When a school's organizational structure shifts to a model where leadership is distributed, numerous leadership possibilities are created so that leaders may emerge within the school. Leadership is not role-specific, reserved only for administrators; instead, the job of the school leader is to fashion learning opportunities for faculty and staff in order that they might develop into productive leaders in both formal and informal capacities.

The current hierarchy of leadership in many schools signifies that power resides with the leadership team, therefore, at the top of the school's organizational structure. As a consequence, leadership is viewed as the privilege of the few rather than the many. In

addition, the separate academic structures in schools, the subject or department divisions, present barriers to teachers working together (Harris, 2003b). These structures mitigate the likelihood of teachers attaining autonomy and taking on leadership roles beyond their discipline, creating a barrier to teachers viewing their role as instructional leaders in their schools.

For many, teacher leadership is acceptable in principle but largely inconceivable in practice. Distributed leadership requires those in formal leadership positions to relinquish power to others. Aside from the challenge to their authority and ego, distributed leadership potentially places the principal in a vulnerable position because they will lack direct control over individual decisions. Furthermore, there are financial barriers; for example, formal leadership positions in schools carry additional monetary stipends. Consequently, to secure informal leadership in schools requires principals to use other incentives and to seek ways of empowering staff as they take on leadership responsibilities (Danielson, 2007; Fairman & Makenzie, 2015; Harris, 2003b).

Additionally, distributed leadership poses the challenge of how to distribute responsibility, authority, and, more importantly, who distributes responsibility and authority. If it remains the case that the principal distributes leadership responsibilities to teachers, then distributed leadership becomes nothing more than informed delegation. A distributed view of leadership "incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilizing staff in the instructional change process" (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002, p. 20). It implies a social distribution of leadership where the leadership function stretches over the work of several individuals and where the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders

(Spillane, 2002). Furthermore, it implies an inter-dependency rather than a dependency embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility. While distributed leadership does not equate with delegation, it also does not represent a form of leadership that is so diffuse that it loses its distinctive qualities. It is clear that specific tasks and functions would have to be retained by those in formal leadership positions, but also that the key to successful leadership resides in the involvement of teachers in collectively guiding and shaping instructional development (Harris, 2003a).

Problem Statement

"Leadership is a function, not a role. Put simply, leadership in schools begins with individuals who bring colleagues together to improve learning for students" (Reich, 2017, para. 1). These ideas about distributed leadership are not new. Still, there is a lack of imagination or innovation in how people think about their assumptions about leadership. It sounds simple, but it is also incredibly challenging to do in practice.

Unfortunately, many teachers doubt their capacity to be leaders (Mulford, 2003). However, teacher leadership is essential because when researchers interview teachers about who influences their teaching practice, their number one answer is other teachers—not principals, not outside consultants—but other teachers. In other words, teacher leadership is vital for sharing innovative practices among teachers (Leithwood, 2008; Reich, 2017; Spillane, 2002). If we want to improve students' learning experiences, we must recognize the profound influence that teachers have on each other and the classroom and empower teachers to be leaders and collaborators.

The results of studies on distributed leadership as having a positive impact on instruction and, by extension, student achievement, is mixed. Empirical evidence about

the consequences of distributed leadership offers a cautionary tale on shifting to this model with the expectation of a direct correlation to increase student achievement. Leithwood, Mascall, and Strauss (2009) reviewed multiple studies on distributed leadership models and found a small number of studies that were generally not supportive of the model. Specifically, Leithwood references a prior study he conducted with Jantzi (2000), where they found that more leadership detracts from the clarity of purpose, sense of mission, and what needs to be accomplished.

Given these findings regarding distributed leadership, this study is designed to assess the perceptions of teacher-leaders in a high school setting regarding the challenges and power inherent in operating within a distributed leadership model. The study provides the context for the cultural shift from a traditional model in the organization and the teacher-leaders view of their roles and influence towards building the instructional efficacy of other teachers at the school. Furthermore, the researcher seeks to identify the conditions at the school that allowed for a shift towards a distributed leadership model while providing a blueprint for possible replication at other school settings.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative research is a single-case study conducted at a suburban high school consisting of ten department chairs, who are non-evaluator, teacher-leaders. In this setting, two assistant principals who, along with the building principal, comprise the school's administration. This group of teacher-leaders serves as a mechanism to study the school's transition over time from a direct and traditional top-down leadership model to the current distributed leadership model. Furthermore, the study explores the groups' perceptions of their leadership capacity and their ability to bring high-quality

instructional practices to the rest of the teaching staff. The analysis seeks to gauge the readiness and willingness of these leaders, the perceptions of this leadership team, and their successes and challenges in building the collective efficacy of the teaching staff towards a high-quality instructional (HQI) model designed by the district.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceived relationship between distributed leadership and increased teacher efficacy resulting in changes to instructional practices in schools. Moreover, this case study examines the department chairperson (DC) and their role as an instructional leader as a conduit towards expanding the instructional capacity of teachers, both departmentally and collectively. Finally, the study examines the evolution of distributed leadership in one suburban high school and the impact that the school's culture played in accelerating or impeding the change to employing this leadership structure. **A** narrative approach is used to review the history of the school's hierarchy and the instructional practices employed in classrooms over five years and the shift towards a distributed leadership model.

Research Questions

The following five questions guide this research:

- What factors contribute to an educational institution's transition from a traditional leadership model to a distributed/shared leadership model that fosters high-quality instruction?
- How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in this transition?
- How does the culture of the educational institution influence the transition to the distributed/shared leadership model?

While the primary focus of the study is the capacity-building developed through distributed leadership on mid-level, non-evaluating teacher-leaders, a subset of questions related to the model's impact at the school level are also explored:

- How does a distributed leadership model impact collective teacher efficacy?
- How does a distributed leadership model impact a school in building and strengthening instructional capacity?

A case study approach is used because it is the best design to gauge the impact of an emerging distributed model in a school-based organization and the perceptions of its empowered leaders to improve instructional efficacy among teaching staff.

Theoretical Foundations

Current research in the field of distributed leadership documents the changing instructional practices employed through distributed leadership, including the evolving practices of collaboration, coaching, and collegial visits/conversations among teaching staff. The documentation also includes examining the school's capacity for shared leadership and instructional practices, as well as the mindset of the teacher-leaders to build the collective efficacy of teachers towards a high-quality instructional model. Since Distributed Leadership Theory is aligned with the school district's administrative vision, which already values and promotes a shared leadership approach, the research reviews how the school and district models converge towards shared leadership and if this has created coherence in the organizational systems at both levels, supporting increased teacher efficacy in instructional practices. The study expands on the distributed model and explores the factors, both perceived and practical, that the team faces in their work to

lead the school faculty in building their collective efficacy towards a high-quality instructional model. Distributed Leadership Theory is grounded in the belief that educators should enhance not only student learning but also the learning of the adults within the school. Team inquiry, learning, and collaborative problem-solving are essential ingredients of this distributed leadership approach.

Conceptual Framework

School leadership must respond to the needs of our ever-changing, information-filled society by embracing new forms of leadership, especially teacher leadership (Frost & Durrant, 2003). Distributed leadership spreads the responsibility of leading to multiple individual educators in an anti-hierarchical or horizontal manner, "Teacher-leaders can transform schools into communities that prepare students for citizenship and work in a complex, technological, and democratic society" (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p. 12). Silins and Mulford's (2002) research illustrates the strong relationship between higher student outcomes and leadership distributed throughout the school community involving teacher empowerment in areas teachers considered to be their strengths.

Also influencing this study is the organizational theory work by Davidson and Taylor (1999), who presented their research paper at a conference in Canada. Their study, Principal Succession and Teacher Leadership in School Restructuring, involved two schools at which a proven model of school reform, the Accelerated Schools Project, had been implemented. They examined the proposition that the teacher leadership, which developed at these schools through the accelerated schools process, proved to be a viable tool for sustaining the reforms in the face of principal succession.

Hallinger and Heck published two studies on leadership and the capacity for student learning. The first, Collaborative Leadership and School Improvement: Understanding the Impact on School Capacity and Student Learning (2010), was undertaken to seek insights into how collaborative school leadership contributes to school improvement. Their paper describes findings from a series of related quantitative studies in which they sought to understand how leadership contributes to school capacity for improvement and student learning. Their report presents the results of analyses of a longitudinal dataset collected from 198 primary schools in the United States over four years. The data described student and teacher perceptions of collaborative leadership and school improvement capacity, as well as student achievement in reading and math.

Their analysis confirmed the existence of an indirect feedback loop between leadership and learning in the context of a reciprocal effects model. More specifically, they found that change in collaborative leadership was related positively to change in school improvement capacity, and change in school improvement capacity was positively related to student growth in reading and math. Growth in learning outcomes did not appear to serve as a driver for change in school improvement capacity and collaborative leadership. Change in capacity, however, was predictive of change in collaborative leadership. While the results offered little leverage in understanding the dynamics in these relationships as they evolved, the overall pattern of results favored a perspective on school improvement leadership as a mutual influence or reciprocal process (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Finally, the work of Bass and Riggio (2006) on organizational change merges seamlessly with the work of Ash and Persall (2000) on the necessary change in the

leadership and organizational dynamics needed in schools to meet the needs of students. Transformational leadership is identified, by all four researchers, as a leadership approach that causes a change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of advancing followers into leaders. Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. For example, connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance (Bass, 1999).

Distributed leadership theory encompasses a transformative leadership design when viewing a school setting through an organizational management lens. Furthermore, transformational leadership design takes the role of leader beyond the transactional work of task completion and moves the work of the leader into the realm of fostering personnel towards becoming agents of change. In education, this means leaders must motivate and inspire faculty and staff to assume leadership roles, whether formally or informally.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study is to explore the impact that the role of the department chairperson has in a distributed leadership model and their work as a collaborative team member and as an individual leader in promoting high-quality instruction by building the instructional capacity among the teaching faculty.

Furthermore, the study explores the factors, perceived and practical, for the implementation of a distributed leadership model to increase the collective teacher efficacy in the school. Transformational, in its approach to school-based leadership design, Distributed Leadership Theory is a significant shift that redefines a school leader. The work of Ash and Persall (2000) posit that creating an organizational culture and infrastructure to support leadership opportunities for everyone: a "leader-full" (p. 1) organization, requires a transformation in professional thinking about teaching and learning. Student learning must now become the focus of our educational efforts such that school leaders must have the ability to create systemic change and pursue ever-higher levels of student achievement. Given the shifting paradigm of organizational leadership in education, we must think in new patterns and act within new models.

A shift in design and mindset, where leadership is not specific, reserved only for administrators, but instead, where the job of the school leader is to fashion learning opportunities for faculty and staff so that they might develop into productive leaders, is part of the distributed leadership model. This theory is grounded in the belief that educators should enhance not only student learning but also the learning of the adults within the school. Team inquiry, learning, and collaborative problem-solving are essential ingredients of this leadership approach.

Since the expertise needed for school improvement must come from a broader base of individuals with diverse skills and knowledge regarding curriculum, pedagogy and best practices, assessments, and standards, the distributed model can provide a pathway for classroom and school improvement (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). The distributed leadership model in this case study examines this concept and

explores the model and its utilization of collaboration, collegial inquiry, and the sharing of best practices to move high-quality instruction forward.

Definitions

Change Theory – Though technically simple, this socially complex paradigm involves moving from the status quo toward a new vision and cultural shift. Change transformation would not be possible without accompanying messiness that will create disequilibrium, which can be uncomfortable. People have to make sense of the process for themselves (Fullan, 2005).

Collective Teacher Efficacy – A staff's shared belief that through their collective action, they can positively influence student outcomes (Donohoo, 2017).

Department Chairs (DC) – The ten teacher-leaders at the school. The position carries a full course-load, with non-evaluative and non-administrative capacity. Each position is appointed by the principal (as a stipend position), to lead work towards high-quality instruction in their department and in the school, as a collective leadership team.

Department Learning Time (DLT) – Regularly scheduled, dedicated time given to teachers to meet during the school day, by department, led and facilitated by Department Chairs.

Distributed Leadership – This approach is primarily concerned with the practice of leadership rather than specific leadership roles or responsibilities. It equates with shared, collective, and extended leadership practice that builds the capacity for change and improvement (Harris, 2012).

High-Quality Instruction (HQI) – This construct reflects those features of teachers' instructional practices well known to be positively related to student outcomes, both cognitive and affective (Hattie, 2009).

Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) – The participants in this case study who comprise the collective leadership as part of the school's distributed leadership model. They are also referred to as the department's Leadership Team or Department Chairs (DC).

Leadership – A facilitative ability in team inquiry and learning and collaborative problem solving; for example, imagining future possibilities; examining shared beliefs; asking questions; collecting, analyzing, and interpreting responses; and engaging in meaningful conversation about teaching and learning (Ash & Persall, 2000).

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) – The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not merely to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools (DuFour, 2004).

School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) – A blueprint designed to articulate a school's strategic plan of action for the school year, which may also be a two-year plan. Domains are taken from the Department of Education Standards for School and District Improvement (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2018).

School Culture – The guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2006).

Systems Thinking – This is a management discipline that first observes discrete functions and interactions between components. A theory that posits that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. In education, that would be the interactions among teachers, learners, administrators, digital content, and learning goals (Cauthen, 2017).

Teacher-Leaders – These are teachers empowered, through formal and informal roles, to make decisions and lead in the classroom, the school, and the community. These teachers influence others and encourage others to improve their performance and development. Moreover, these professionals lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher-learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice (Edwards, 2007; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2004).

Transformative Leadership – A leadership approach in which a leader works with teams to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group (Bass, 1999).

Assumptions

The researcher of this case study assumes that a distributed leadership model will allow for greater collective capacity building among teachers, as led by department chairs. Furthermore, this researcher assumes that teachers are receptive and willing to reflect on their practices in order to improve their instruction leading to improved student achievement. Another assumption revolves around the participants in this case study. It assumes the participants will honestly and transparently reflect their struggles and successes in their responses to the anonymous survey.

A further assumption is that all members of the case study believe that opportunities for teachers in leadership roles positively influence classroom instruction. Finally, that department chairs, now empowered with a shared mission and purpose that they have created, are willing to model, challenge, and create a dynamic that reflects their growth. They will be transparently projecting and honestly discussing as well as modeling with their colleagues. At the heart of this dynamic is trust, a foundational lever in change theory, one of the theoretical pillars used in this case study.

Scope and Delimitations

This study explores the perceptions of the ten recognized department chairs at a suburban high school in the Northeast. This group will be asked to reflect and examine their perceptions regarding their role in the school's distributed leadership model. The specific focus has been chosen because of the emerging nature of the school's leadership team, the team's role in increasing the collective capacity in their departments, and the overall school, around high-quality instruction in the classroom. Furthermore, this cohort has been together as a team for three years and has grown as a collective entity. Although diverse in their approaches, methods, and instruction, they all navigate their respective departments and the various cultures and climates of each department. This group was chosen as a model for its potential transferability to other schools considering a distributed leadership model approach. Each member of the cohort is a tenured teacher with a range of teaching experience from five years, as a second career, to more than thirty years in the classroom and consists of six females and four males.

Limitations

The department chairs are not representative of all teachers in the school. An application process was employed to choose them for these positions, and several have replaced faculty who continue to teach in the school. These factors may contribute to their varying degree of perceived leadership efficacy within the group, as the climate and culture in each department differ based on the specific nature of the population of teachers they lead. Moreover, this group has engaged in leadership work, including book studies of *Good to Great* by Jim Collins (2001), *Turn the Ship Around* by L. David Marquet (2012), and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni (2002). They have also attended a series of leadership retreats led by the building principal and worked together to create the school continuous improvement plan (SCIP) for the school, leading faculty workshops, and setting agendas for department-led instruction time (DLT).

As principal of the school, the researcher is heavily invested in the success of the organization. The researcher has devoted time and capital to restructuring the leadership model and, in so doing, has challenged the status quo culture of the school. As such, the researcher's bias toward the leaders being studied cannot be entirely separated from the research. In order to mitigate this bias, the researcher incorporated a peer review protocol to ensure the objectivity of the questions and data sources. Anonymous surveys and archival material such as accreditation reports will be used as data for this study. Multiple data points were coded and triangulated to establish that the emerging themes are consistent in each data set.

Significance to Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006), Distributed Leadership Theory (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), Role Theory (Margolis & Huggins, 2012), School Culture and Leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013), and Change Theory (Fullan, 2006) serve as the theoretical frameworks toward understanding the organizational dynamics of leadership in 21st-century schools and its impact on student achievement. Evidence of distributed leadership and its impact and effect has been summarized in numerous books and articles (Harris, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2009a).

This study provides additional evidence of the impact of adult learning and leading in a distributed leadership model in real-time throughout a significant part of a school year. Moreover, it delves into the perceptions of the identified teacher-leaders in the study cohort. Their perceptions will be studied as they relate to the participant's role within the organization and the inherent tension associated with that of middle-level managers. That is, these department chairs, while possessing the necessary state certification in administration to evaluate, are not evaluators, yet they are leading teachers in strengthening instructional practices.

As well, the combination of transformational leadership theory and change theory is incorporated into the research because this new paradigm of distributed leadership continues to manifest itself in the school under study. Finally, the theory of collective efficacy is explored as the leadership team begins to implement their work to build the capacity of all teachers both within the departments they lead and the school as a whole.

The addition of this case study to the already existing body of work, which increasingly points towards a positive relationship between distributed leadership,

organizational improvement and increased teacher instructional efficacy (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), serve to demonstrate the theories in action, and the impact of distributed leadership as a management strategy in a school setting. It is noteworthy that many of the existing studies have identified the importance of distributed leadership as a potential contributor to positive change and school improvement. Furthermore, the perceptions of the teacher-leaders are explored as they navigate the organizational structure of their school in working towards creating a high-quality instructional dynamic both individually as a leader and as a collective unit.

Distributed Leadership Theory views all teachers as leaders. Their work in the classroom makes them leaders in education and instruction. As the role of the department chair is redefined, this organizational pivot shifts the department chairs from viewing daily task completion as their primary responsibility to an intentional focus on teaching and learning. To improve schools, principals must provide the time, effort, and leadership to enable faculty and staff to capitalize on their collective knowledge and share it. Successful schools, like successful businesses, must have an organizational structure that can meet the continually changing needs of their customers. Schools, as well as businesses, need leaders who encourage change and support organizational learning (Ash & Persall, 2000). Just as businesses today require leaders who can improve the way knowledge is created, managed, and transferred, it is critical that schools have leaders who are in charge of knowledge transfer and can enhance the quality of collective thinking within their organizations. The primary work of schools is to transfer knowledge and create competency, insight, and wisdom (Ash & Persall, 2000).

Significance to Practice

Since the expertise needed for school improvement must come from a broader base of individuals with diverse skills and knowledge, research by Silins and Mulford (2002) has shown that student outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership sources are shared throughout the school community and when teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them. This implies a changing view of structures away from command and control. It suggests a view of the school as a learning community chiefly concerned with maximizing the achievement capacities of all those within the organization (Gronn, 2005). This study adds to the research on distributed leadership from the perspective of teacher-leaders and their path to lead high-quality instruction at their school.

Individually, the components of some of the leading theories on distributed leadership are examined as they relate to the study participants. For example, Gronn's (2005) blending of traditional practices with collaboration based on intuitive relationship-building is explored in addition to Spillane's (2012) components of collaboration and coordination, and MacBeath's incremental approach based on the culture of the institution. Finally, Harris' (2012) capacity building and position suggesting a continual emergence of leaders will all be blended as the practices of this school-based leadership team are examined. Significantly, for schools that exist in a traditional hierarchical management paradigm, the implications of a distributed leadership approach may become apparent through this case study as it explores the honest perceptions of these participants and their challenges and successes as leaders.

Distributed leadership theory has gained much attention in school systems as a strategy to address the need to shift this dynamic of top-down leadership. The work of Ash and Persall (2000) asserts that creating an organizational culture and infrastructure to support leadership opportunities for everyone, a "leader-full" organization, will foster student improvement through better instructional practices by the faculty and staff. Distributed leadership extends beyond traditional roles in an educational organization. As noted in the work of two professors in library preparation programs, "Leadership is not role-specific, reserved only for administrators; rather, the job of the leader is to fashion learning opportunities for faculty and staff in order that they might themselves develop into productive leaders. … We promote collaboration; we model professionalism, and we practice mentoring" (Reeve & Church, 2013, p. 11).

New teacher roles, including responsibilities for interdisciplinary teaching, curriculum development, student assessment, counseling, peer review, and parental involvement, require leadership skills and functions previously reserved for principals and central office supervisory staff. These roles are complex, require high levels of skill and ability, and are collaborative and collegial.

High-Quality Instruction

On a broad spectrum, high-quality instruction embraces the soundness of all teaching and learning transactions in the classroom. It manifests itself in the use of appropriate instructional strategies to evoke enduring learning. Quality instruction is defined as the degree to which instruction is adequately delivered; meets students' learning needs, learning styles, interests, expectations; and is well aligned to standards. It is a composite of (pedagogical) competency, adequate preparation and effective

organizational skills; currency of knowledge of content; technological competence, resourcefulness, and instructors' dispositional attributes (Sogunro, 2017).

The district has embarked on creating and defining a High-Quality Instructional (HQI) model for teaching staff to guide their classroom teaching practices. The teacher-leadership team has been tasked with creating the conditions to lead an HQI model to increase teacher efficacy at their school. The work of Bass and Riggio (2006) on organizational change supports the shift to a distributed leadership model based on the necessity of change in the leadership dynamic needed in schools in order to meet the needs of students. Furthermore, both the district's HQI model, as well as the school's distributed leadership approach, are grounded in the belief that educators should enhance not only student learning but also adult learning within the school.

Summary and Transition

The role of the school leader is changing. The emergence of distributed leadership models to replace traditional, top-down administrative hierarchies is enabling teachers to become more involved in decision making in their classes and the school community. This shift is empowering teachers to assume more collaborative roles as instructional leaders among their colleagues while building their instructional capacity and that of the teachers with whom they work. Furthermore, collective efficacy among teachers strengthens classroom instructional practice.

This transformation also creates a unique skill set needed for those in positions of teacher leadership, such as department chairs. This increasingly instructionally-focused role brings with it exciting transformational opportunities as well as challenges that stem from organizational thinking mired in old habits and existing cultural routines.

Transforming a school from the principal as the sole leader to a distributed model, and more specifically, to a focused formative leadership model, cannot occur in the short term. It is an evolution that must answer and address the factors necessary in the organization, including the culture of the organization as well as the support needed to foster these emerging leadership roles.

A distributed model in schools can lead to a more cohesive organization where teachers are empowered to become leaders in instruction and where teaching capacity is built through shared and collaborative professional development leading to a more coherent and cohesive system of learning and organizational clarity. A myriad of change theories, including organizational change theories, adult change theories, teacher efficacy theories, and distributed leadership theories, as well as their corresponding research, are discussed in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The job of leading a school has become even more entangled with expanding policy demands. At the same time, the personal relational and ethical dimensions of a principal's job remain crucial to staff and student self-esteem, well-being, social growth, and other non-academic outcomes (Walker, 2015).

For many, teacher leadership is acceptable in principle but largely inconceivable in practice (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2000; Harris, 2012; MacBeath, 1998). First, distributed leadership requires those in formal leadership positions to relinquish power to others. Aside from challenging their authority and their ego, this potentially makes the principal's position vulnerable because they lack direct control over certain decisions. In addition, there are financial barriers as formal leadership positions in schools carry additional monetary stipends. Consequently, to secure informal leadership in schools requires principals to use other incentives and to seek ways to empower staff as they take on leadership responsibilities.

Second, the top-down approaches to leadership and the internal school structures offer significant impediments to the development of distributed leadership. The current hierarchy of leadership in many schools means that power resides with the administrative team, i.e., at the top of the school. As a consequence, leadership is viewed as the privilege of the few rather than the many. Furthermore, the divisions of schools into academic

structures—the subject or departments—present barriers to teachers working together (Harris & Muijs, 2003). These structures mitigate against teachers attaining autonomy and taking on leadership roles beyond their discipline.

Finally, and most importantly, distributed leadership poses the challenge of how to disperse responsibility, authority, and, more importantly, who distributes responsibility and authority? If it remains the case that the principal distributes leadership responsibilities to teachers, then distributed leadership becomes nothing more than informed delegation. A distributed view of leadership incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilizing staff in the instructional change process (Spillane et al., 2002). It implies a social distribution of leadership where the leadership function is stretched over the work of several individuals and where the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders (Spillane, 2002). It implies inter-dependency rather than dependency embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility. While distributed leadership does not equate with delegation, it also does not represent a form of leadership that is so diffuse that it loses its distinctive qualities. It is clear that specific tasks and functions would have to be retained by those in formal leadership positions but that the key to successful leadership resides in the involvement of teachers in collectively guiding and shaping instructional development (Harris, 2003b).

School leadership must respond to the needs of our ever-changing, information-filled society by embracing new forms of leadership, especially teacher leadership (Frost & Durrant, 2003). Over the past four decades, scholars working in societies throughout the world have sought to validate an evidence-based connection between school

leadership and student learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). This research has documented a small but statistically significant, indirect relationship between school leadership and student achievement. Specifically, the research indicates that school leadership is the second greatest influence on student achievement, only after the classroom instruction of the teacher (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2012). This work has provided evidence for scholars to refocus their attention on refining the "paths" of thought of school leaders, which influence student learning (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). From this work, significant paths emerged that connect school leadership and the professional learning of teachers (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Margolis and Huggins (2012), as well as Firestone and Martinez (2007), have documented the work already taking place in school leadership where the shared, or distributed model is occurring. These past studies point to the emergence of distributed models of leadership and their evolution in schools. Margolis and Huggins (2012) studied a model of "Hybrid Leadership," where teachers had a reduced teaching schedule, and the rest of their workload comprised leading and working with colleagues to build their capacity. Firestone and Martinez (2007) focused on the influence teacher-leaders can have through shifting the traditional paradigm of a hierarchical structure to one of viewing teacher-leaders as change agents in the district.

Literature Search Strategy

An anchor text used in support of this case study was *Distributed Leadership According to the Evidence: A Compilation of Studies and Findings* by Leithwood, Mascall, and Strauss (2009). This compilation included findings and conclusions by noted scholars in the field of distributed leadership, including Alma Harris, Ken

Leithwood, Peter Gronn, John MacBeath, and James Spillane. The various studies published by these researchers and their findings brought into focus the importance of developing a model that fosters a collaborative and shared approach to distributed leadership in a school system.

Studies by Hallinger and Heck (2010a, 2010b) found that successful leadership is a mutual influence or reciprocal process. Furthermore, the work of Harris (2003) posits that effective distributed leadership is interdependent rather than dependent: that it is a shared network of leading and learning. The work of Spillane et al. (2002) support the other researchers' conclusions as they state that leading and learning is a social function. Connected to this is the notion of building trusting relationships where risk-taking is honored and supported.

Creating the environment for this to occur incorporates a multifaceted process; first, however, an organizational shift should occur. As Collins (2001) notes in his work, *Good to Great*, transforming leadership in an organization begins with setting and articulating a clear transformational vision and having the "right people on the bus in the right seats" (p. 41). The change imperative in a school creates a dynamic where the principal begins as a transformational change agent while identifying and supporting emerging leaders and then placing them in positions to begin sharing leadership among the staff.

MacBeath's (2005) work also supports a systematic approach toward distributed leadership, indicating that successful implementation of a distributed leadership model should include a multifaceted approach to an organizational shift. In phase one, the principal is an observer and transformational leader; phase two, the principal identifies

leaders and allows them to demonstrate their leadership potential; and phase three, the principal increases their leadership scope in the school and continues to foster opportunities, both formally and informally, for leadership opportunities for the entire staff. Further supporting the distributed leadership concept is the work of Ash and Persall (2000), who view all stakeholders as leaders. The teacher is the leader of instruction in their classroom, and the student is the leader of their learning.

Collins (2001) presents a process for creating conditions for such change to occur and be sustained from an organizational lens; Fullan (2006) in a school setting. Both authors write about creating a shift in leading and the need for a focus on the created vision (or concept) from all leaders. Also discussed is the importance of all leaders working in unison to support, challenge, and guide each other and, ultimately, the organization towards their espoused goal. Another common theme is the notion of time. Change theory posits that a vision is best sustained when using a methodical and long-range view.

The final component of this distributed leadership study builds on the works of John Hattie around collective teacher efficacy. His 2012 qualitative study ranks collective teacher efficacy as the number one factor influencing student achievement. Hallinger et al. (2017) also support Hattie's work and tie it to the transformational work done in creating the shift towards distributed leadership. Specifically, Hallinger and his colleagues found that principals influence teacher efficacy by articulating an inspiring vision of learning for the school, setting challenging but attainable goals, clarifying standards of teacher and pupil performance, fostering teacher learning and development, and coaching teachers for success (Hallinger et al., 2017).

Much of this research used databases such as ERIC and RESEARCHGATE and GOOGLE SCHOLAR. Accessible dissertations: on distributed leadership include the works of Mansour (2011) and Noble (2014); on change theory, the work of Murillo (2013); and on teacher efficacy, the work of DeMarco (2018). These seminal works on the components of distributed leadership were the focus of this case study. The various components were examined from the viewpoint of the ten teacher-leaders regarding their school. Their perceptions were examined through a survey, which included open-ended reflective questions. As well, the historical narrative of the emergence of the model at the school is presented. The components of this distributed leadership model are identified in the theoretical framework found in this chapter.

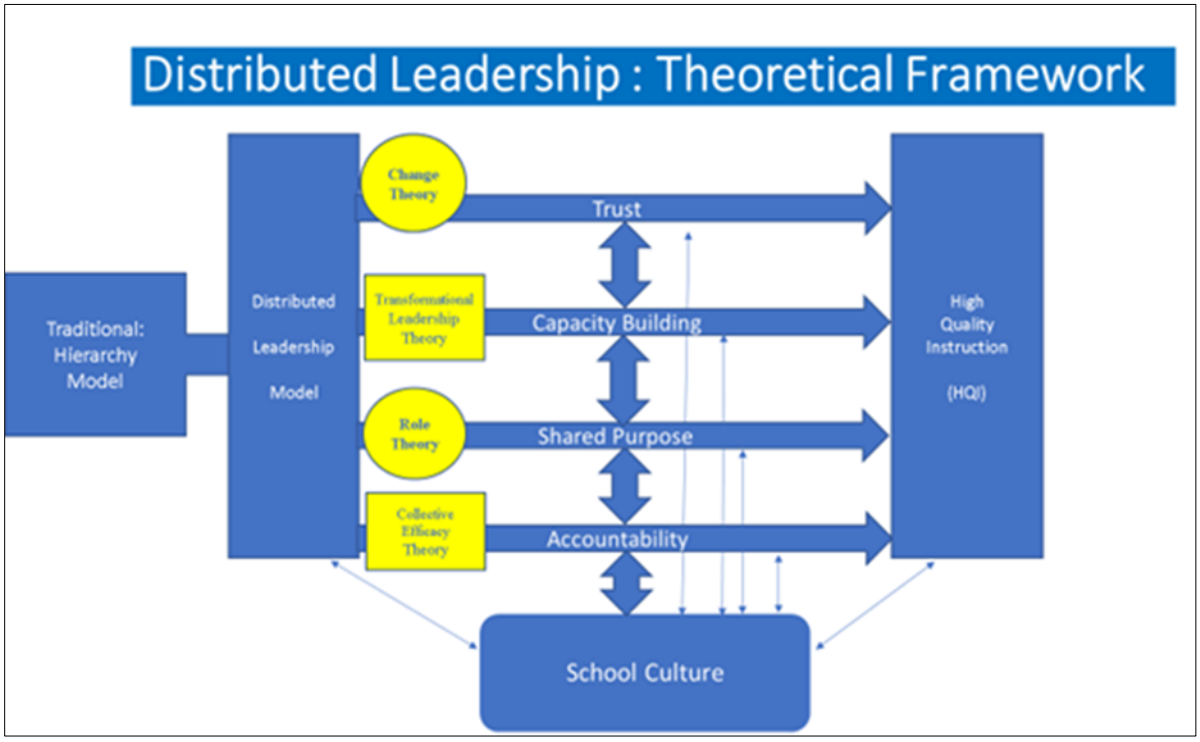
Theoretical Framework

Four theories are examined, both individually and collectively, in order to explore the distributive leadership model of this study. Specifically, each theory involves a component of organizational realignment, vision setting, and personnel management. Change theory, role theory, and collective teacher efficacy are examined in order to understand the dynamics inherent in a distributed leadership model, its impact on school culture, and how it shapes the experiences and ability of identified teacher-leaders in shaping, fostering, and growing the professional capacity of their colleagues in the school. Furthermore, transformational leadership theory will provide a foundation for this study and the shift from a traditional organizational, top-down model to a distributed leadership framework. Likewise, various components and factors are explored that may enhance or mitigate a successful distributed leadership model that leads to high-quality instruction; these include trust, accountability, shared purpose, and capacity building.

This chapter reviews literature in these areas in order to provide a framework of existing research in the identified areas. The case study examined how these espoused theories collectively impact the distributed leadership model in this school setting.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework of the Case Study of Transforming Leadership to a Distributed Leadership Model and Building Teachers' Capacity Towards High-Quality Instruction



Distributed Leadership

Building a consensus as to the definition of leadership can be daunting. The definition frequently centers on the idea of social influence in the services of a collective goal like instructional improvement or organization efficiency (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). Distributed leadership is not a series of delegated directives from the principal. Rather, the model necessitates a transference of leadership authority and power to multiple members of the faculty, and it frames leadership as a social dynamic that

comes from the collaboration of many in the school. This truly collaborative exercise allows the power to be dispersed among multiple stakeholders with an array of expertise in various fields. Distributed leadership is not merely the spreading out of duties by delegation from the head of school; a true distributed model necessitates a transference of leadership and authority to many individuals. It frames leadership as a social dynamic that exists within an organization, emanating not from one individual, but the collaboration of many (Noble, 2014).

Empowering staff to assume leadership roles has been a mainstay in educational reform movements for decades. The decentralization of school structures began to take shape in the 1980s through formalized teacher-leader roles that sought to empower and professionalize the teacher workforce as a means to recruit more high-quality teachers and to lead how decisions were made in schools. The 1990s brought a focus on teacher research, teacher leadership through coaching models, and facilitating professional learning communities. The evolution of the teacher as leader centers around working with colleagues to improve instructional practices (Firestone & Martinez, 2007).

Hallinger and Heck (2010b) posit that successful leadership for school improvement is a mutual influence or reciprocal process. In other words, both the principal and the senior leadership team purposefully connect to learning outcomes and the capacity to improve. Furthermore, each school has a unique improvement trajectory. As such, principals must be ready to adapt what they do to the changing conditions at different stages of the school improvement process (Hallinger, 2003a). Hallinger and Heck's conclusion that leadership and capacity building operate as a mutual influence

strongly supports the notion that leadership is a highly responsive and contextualized process (Hallinger & Heck, 2010b).

Also contributing to the theoretical framework is the organizational theory work of Davidson and Taylor (1999), who issued their research paper at a conference in Canada, examining *Principal Succession and Teacher Leadership in School Restructuring*. This study involved two schools at which a proven model of school reform, the Accelerated Schools Process, had been implemented. They examined the proposition that the teacher leadership, which was developed at these schools, through the accelerated schools process, proved to be a viable tool for sustaining the reforms in the face of principal succession.

Davidson & Taylor (1999) collected data from two rural elementary schools—in different districts—in a mid-south state that had participated in the Accelerated Schools Project. The research design involved a case study methodology; the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers and principals at both schools. Teachers who had been at the school continuously, during the school's involvement with accelerated schools and the year prior, were interviewed. The effectiveness of the reform model was threatened by frequent principal succession at both schools; however, at neither school was the process destroyed by the changes in principal. Teachers at both schools explained that their success in sustaining the restructuring effort was because of teacher leadership. In summary, this longitudinal study found that the impact of teacher leadership was the primary driver to sustaining school success

Barrett and Breyer (2014), published in the *Journal of Research Initiatives*, The Influence of Effective Leadership on Teaching and Learning. The purpose of this research

was to explore administrator modeling of engaging, energizing methods during staff development and meetings to determine if principals could inspire, further develop, and retain effective classroom teachers and contribute to academic achievement in a rural school setting. Two key questions guided this research, (1) how school principals can retain relevance, instill passion, and provide effective leadership that motivates teachers through such challenging times; and (2) can administrators achieve a positive, stable environment where teachers view principals as competent leaders and cooperative partners in the education process through modeling effective pedagogical strategies and tools.

The research project took place at an elementary school located in a rural setting within the southeastern United States. Demographics at the school contribute to persistent community, economic, and academic challenges that exacerbate a school culture underpinned by low faculty morale. The results of the study support the concept of effective school leadership and the notion that effective leadership guides teaching and learning through modeling effective strategies, building positive collaborative relationships, and demonstrating support for teachers as they implement new strategies in their classrooms. In an environment where principals demonstrate efficacy in pedagogy and lead teachers in learning and adopting effective strategies, teachers can be both motivated and energized to implement fresh approaches to teaching (Barrett & Breyer, 2014).

Hallinger and Heck published two studies on leadership and the capacity for student learning. The first, “Collaborative Leadership and School Improvement: Understanding the Impact on School Capacity and Student Learning” (2010a), was

undertaken to seek insights into how collaborative school leadership contributes to school improvement. This paper describes findings from a series of related quantitative studies in which they sought to understand how leadership contributes to school capacity for improvement and student learning. This report presents the results of analyses of a longitudinal dataset collected over four years from 198 primary schools in the United States. The responses described student and teacher perceptions of collaborative leadership and school improvement capacity, as well as student achievement in reading and math.

The analysis confirmed the existence of an indirect feedback loop between leadership and learning in the context of a reciprocal effects model. More specifically, the change to collaborative leadership was related positively to change in school improvement capacity, and change in school improvement capacity was positively related to student growth in reading and math. School growth in learning outcomes did not appear to serve as a driver for change in school improvement capacity and collaborative leadership. Change in capacity, however, was predictive of change in collaborative leadership. While the results offered little leverage in understanding the dynamics in these relationships as they evolved, the overall pattern of results favored a perspective of school improvement leadership as a mutual influence or reciprocal process.

Hallinger and Heck's second study, *Leadership for Learning: Does Collaborative Leadership Make a Difference in School Improvement?* (2010b), focused on understanding whether and how collaborative leadership makes a difference in elementary school improvement and student learning. Three research questions were posed in their study: (1) Does collaborative leadership impact school performance? (2)

Does collaborative leadership impact the improvement of school performance over time? and (3) How do schools differ in their improvement over time, and how are those differences related to changes in school leadership and capacity? As defined in this study, shared leadership encompasses both formal and informal sources of leadership, and conceptualizes leadership as an organizational property aimed at school improvement.

The quantitative measurements used indicated that there was a 12% overall increase in student performance. Furthermore, the study found that there was evidence of an indirect effect of initial collaborative leadership on initial reading outcomes, though limited in scope. The study noted that their results were consistent with the trend of results from prior cross-sectional studies of school leadership effects. The analysis of longitudinal data supports the view that collaborative leadership positively impacted growth in student learning indirectly through building the instructional capacity in schools (Hallinger & Heck, 2010b).

Distributed leadership involves mobilizing leadership expertise at all levels of the school in order to generate more opportunities for change and to build the capacity for improvement (Harris, 2014). Harris and Spillane (2008) studied the impact of distributed leadership and the efficacy of this model towards strengthening instructional practices and the capacity of teachers. This shift towards building a teacher leadership model that creates collective efficacy towards high-quality instruction underscores the rationale for such an organizational shift. Indeed, as Huggins et al. (2016) note, distributing leadership within schools requires principals, teachers, and other leaders to transition into new roles, which may necessitate the assumption of responsibilities and the development of knowledge. Similarly, Harris (2004) references the research of Hopkins and Jackson

(2002), who conclude that formal leaders in schools need to orchestrate and nurture the space for distributed leadership to occur and to create "shelter conditions" for the leadership of collaborative learning. Similarly, Barth (2006) stated that "A true mark of a leader is not how many followers one begets but how many leaders" (p. 8). These notions raise the question of how authentic distributed leadership is in terms of releasing the hold of traditional hierarchical structures in favor of a more organized distribution of responsibilities based on situations, expertise, and interest.

Giles' (2007) study found that creating and utilizing a collaborative school-based management team, as well as action teams that could implement identified goals—as one school principal in the study did—created an organizational structure that both encouraged and valued collaboration, and respected the decisions made by the groups. Additionally, the practice of intentionally designing the organization in a manner that distributed the decision-making work increased collaborative opportunities (Noble, 2014).

Change Theory

Change theory can be compelling in information education reform strategies and, in turn, getting results but only in hand (and minds, and hearts) of the people who have an in-depth knowledge of the dynamics of how the factors in question operate to get particular results (Fullan, 2006). Elmore (2004) notes that cultural change is not an easy process. He notes that in order for the shift to take place, the modeling of new behaviors must become infused in the organization to supplant the current culture. Furthermore, Elmore posits that cultures do not change by mandate; they change by the specific displacement of existing norms, structures, and processes by others; the process of

cultural change depends fundamentally on modeling the new values and behavior that are expected to displace the existing ones.

The school leaders must model this transformation before the distribution and transfer of leadership can occur. As change theory suggests and as so often happens in organizations, changes shift in paradigms that can be most profound and unsettling for adults. Collins's seminal book on organizational change, *Good to Great* (2001), discusses the impact of transforming an organization based on the recognition of a strategy that all adults in the organization contribute to the shared vision, known as the "Hedgehog Concept." As a school system, the Hedgehog, or focus, is on the core values and beliefs of the school's mission and what must be the focus for all members of the school community. From there, the change lever can be reached by finding those emerging leaders who are willing to focus on the shared vision for the school. As Collins states, in organizational terms and using the metaphor of a bus, "The bus, your company, is at a standstill, and it's your job to get it going. ... In fact, leaders of companies that go from good to great start not with 'where' but with 'who.' They start by getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats" (Collins, 2001, p. 13).

Michael Fullan (2006) notes that for systems change to occur on a larger scale, we need schools to learn from each other and districts to learn from each other: lateral capacity building. It is critical for systems reform (Fullan, 2006). Elmore's work (2004) also addresses systems change in schools by noting that no external accountability scheme can be successful in the absence of internal accountability—the latter is none other than capacity building with a focus on results. Similarly, Fullan notes that it is

capacity building first and judgment second because that is what most motivates change (2006).

Trust

The need for intrinsically motivated stakeholders is essential, requiring trust among people in the organization and a transformational leader who is willing to foster a shared vision of high-quality instruction. It also necessitates building the capacity of their team through relevant professional development while seizing the opportunity to turn over the leadership moments to those who are willing to engage in risk-taking. Providing these opportunities while supporting and celebrating these moments towards achieving the school's stated purpose of providing high-quality instruction to all students fosters a shared leadership experience and builds trust and efficacy in the team dynamic.

As noted earlier, a major tenant for allowing this leadership experience to occur is trust. Relational trust is the trust that exists between stakeholders and each person's ability to uphold their designated obligations and expectations (Noble, 2014). Research conducted by Bryk and Schneider (2003) also looked at the relationship between trust and positive organizational change. Furthermore, this decade-long study showed a correlation between trust in an organization with improved collaboration and student achievement.

In the school community, relational trust focuses on the interrelated dependencies and the dependency of all participants on each other to achieve change and growth. Furthermore, as individuals interact with one another, they are continuously determining the intentions of the actions of others and evaluating how these actions help or hinder

their interests. These perceptions are linked to previous interactions, general reputation, and other factors (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Similarly, Beycioglu, Ozer, and Ugurlu (2012) studied the perceptions of trust in a distributed leadership model. Specifically, their study looked to see whether there was any difference among teachers' perceptions about leadership behaviors of principals and organizational trust and that of their colleagues. Their qualitative study, which sampled over 200 teachers, found statistically significant correlations between perceptions of distributed leadership and trust. The responses showed that teachers who felt their schools were engaged in a distributed leadership model also felt a degree of trust in the school organization.

Research by Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, and Louis (2007) undertook a multi-year comparative case study analysis of six schools employing distributive leadership models in a variety of communities, including urban, suburban, and rural settings. The researchers focused on secondary schools in both middle and high school grades. The responses supported the significance of trust in the distributed leadership approach (Noble, 2014). The initial levels of trust laid the foundation for the design of distributed leadership initiatives and helped shape the subsequent development and performance of a distributed leadership dynamic in mutually reinforcing ways (Smylie et al., 2007).

This study further noted the opposite effect in schools that employed a unilateral approach with the principal as a singular source of authority and input. In this school, the researchers noted a dynamic where the administration worked largely independently of the faculty seeking little input or involvement from the teachers (Smylie et al., 2007). The principal used the magnitude of issues at the school as the rationale for sole decision

making. The researchers noted that this could be seen as further evidence of a lack of trust. The outcome of this school's attempt at distributed leadership consisted more of redistributing the workload rather than sharing leadership and decision making as a cohesive team.

The research of Smylie et al. (2007) made a strong case for the influence (both positive and negative) of trustworthiness in a transition to distributed leadership. The study showed that trust is clearly essential when developing models of distributed leadership. Both in perception and acceptance, levels of trust will influence how teachers attribute actions and change (Noble, 2014).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach in which a leader works with teams to identify needed change, create a vision to guide the change, and execute the change in tandem with committed members of the group (Bass, 1999). Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers they inspire; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work; and, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance (Bass, 1999).

Capacity Building

Eilers and Camacho (2007) studied how the behaviors of administrators led staff to view collaboration as an engaging and energizing shift in school leadership. In their

study, the administrator demonstrated collaborative leadership in two critical ways: "Either by serving as a model to teachers by practicing continuous learning himself or by collaborating with staff and various resources offered by the district" (p. 628)—highlighting the importance of the administrator in leading the transformation towards a distributed model by engaging as a member of the learning community. Furthermore, to successfully shift towards a leadership community, as distributed leadership tries to do, school leaders must not only lead by example but also create structural environments that enable the collaboration to happen (Noble, 2014).

Leadership effects on student learning are achieved indirectly by shaping conditions that affect the quality of teaching and learning in the schools (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010a Leithwood et al., 2010). Also, schools that demonstrate a capacity for sustained school improvement have leadership that develops teacher capacity through meaningful professional learning (Leithwood, 1992; Liu & Hallinger, 2018).

MacBeath (2005) identified a three-step model for leadership development and capacity building. The study, consisting of multiple schools in England, hypothesizes that distributed leadership is an incremental process to develop and foster leadership among teachers. The first phase consists of the principal observing the culture of the school in order to identify teachers who can meet the leadership needs of the school. The study then suggests delegating responsibilities to these potential leaders and monitoring their progress towards implementing the tasks. An example of this delegation may be to facilitate teaching sessions in a professional development setting (on a topic of mutual interest among the potential leader and the group attending the session). The second stage consists of ongoing progress monitoring and providing additional opportunities that

become more complex and have diverse tasks. An example would be in leading a faculty meeting around an instructional practice or initiative to support student learning. The third stage has principals providing ongoing support but intentionally taking a hands-off, less direct role, as the leaders emerge and grow into their leadership areas such as leading a professional learning community (or in the case of this study, a department chair position).

Robinson (2009) suggested that distributed leadership can be seen either as a way for school leadership to be more democratic, less managerial, and less hierarchical or as a prescription for school improvement. Similarly, Mayrowetz (2008) noted that from the normative perspective, distributed leadership could be seen as a way to enhance the democratic notion of schooling, increase a school's efficiency and effectiveness, and build human capacity.

Role Theory

The benefits of including teachers in school leadership can be seen throughout the literature. Participation in decision-making at the school level (impact), and the classroom level (autonomy) has strong connections to teacher empowerment (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Murillo, 2013). However, implementing an effective distributed model poses a myriad of challenges. A primary issue arises, even when research indicates the advantages of change in the decision-making process, as tradition in school cultures holds much weight (Reeves, 2008). Traditionally, teachers have seen their work as limited to working with children in the classroom while principals and administrators manage the schools and make the decisions, which are then passed down to the teachers. Administrators are concerned about whether teachers can

produce needed reforms, keep an instructional focus while performing in leadership roles, and focus on collective improvement in instruction (Murillo, 2013). However, the research points out that increased levels of leadership efficacy have been shown to increase organizational capacity, allowing schools to better respond to the needs of students (Day & Harris, 2002; Mulford & Silins, 2003).

Shared Purpose

The work of Margolis and Huggins (2012) identified the importance of clarity and accountability in defining distributed leadership roles for teacher-leaders. They found that teacher-leaders working in a distributed leadership model faced challenges that emerged from conflicting and non-existent job descriptions and relational deterioration among co-workers. Their work, as studied by Noble (2014), reveals much about the types of conditions that can help or hinder change for moving towards a distributed leadership model in schools. The Margolis and Huggins study makes a strong case for the importance of clear roles and job descriptions for teacher-leaders. The absence of such clarity creates the likelihood of significant challenges that can impede the effectiveness of teacher-leaders. They suggest that creating teacher-leader roles should assist in supporting specific tasks, not merely being a new place to send all new initiatives and programs (Noble, 2014). If teachers view teacher-leaders as another “boss” who merely assumes administrative directives, instead of viewing them as essential resources to improve instructional practices in a trusting and collaborative partnership, then teachers are likely to retreat to safe and traditional, stagnated practices in the classroom.

Klar, Huggins, Hammonds, and Buskey (2015), reviewed several studies regarding the cultivation of leadership in schools using a distributed model. Their

analysis of an earlier study by Margolis and Huggins (2012) stated that principal leadership affects role definition and teacher-leaders' abilities to perform their roles. Their work identified the need for continued study of how high school principals develop the leadership capacities of others in an authentic context, that is to say, without financial incentives.

Role Conflict

According to role theory, leaders may experience role conflict within a business or organization. When employees' expectations of the role of the leaders of their organization differ from what the leaders accept as their role, role conflict can occur. Role conflict can also occur when a leader feels they should be performing a particular role, but employees expect the leader to fill a different role (Grace, 2012).

In 2004, York-Barr and Duke discussed the same concerns about teachers who take on leadership roles. They pointed to teachers' egalitarian attitudes and misconceptions about equity as potential problems for new teacher leaders. In the same vein, case studies showed that even when teacher-leaders were enthusiastic about reform, emotional attachment to school norms or roles led to stress and disappointment (Murillo, 2013). The second type of role conflict occurs in teacher leadership when teachers take on more responsibilities but are not given the resources, time, information, or training to carry out the added responsibilities, along with their regular teaching assignments (Barth, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Finally, as Murillo (2013) recounts from her research, teachers are trying to deal with their conflicting roles as they face mandates for more empowering roles of teacher leadership while at the same time, they are

experiencing disempowering mandates of standardization and centralization (Fullan, 2005; Lambert, 2003).

These challenges can significantly hinder the capacity of teacher-leader development and create a cultural barrier for a distributed leadership model to be effective and impactful as a transformational change in the school organization. Furthermore, these potential conflicts show the importance of strategic and purposeful support by the organizational leader, the school principal, to develop the efficacy of teacher-leaders in order for meaningful collaboration to take hold and begin to build the collective capacity of the instructional staff.

Collective Efficacy Theory

Berebitsky and Salloum (2017) hypothesized that the characteristics of a school social network are factors that can predict collective efficacy. In prior research, aspects of the school social network were linked to teachers' self-efficacy; Siciliano (2016) found that knowledge access and peer influence have a significant and positive relationship with teacher self-efficacy. The act of turning to another colleague for advice is evidence of having faith in an individual's capability. If schools are characterized by such social interaction around instruction, it is likely collective efficacy is strengthened. Schools are social institutions by design; the organization of a school facilitates or impedes instructional interactions between students and teachers and collegial activities among teachers (Wenger, 1998). Logically, then, such an organization may contribute to collective efficacy just as collective efficacy may inform the school organizational structure. To explicitly examine school structure, Berebitsky and Salloum (2017), in their study, employed social network theory. Recently, researchers have used social network

analysis (Scott, 2000) to study teacher and school capacity (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Daly & Finnigan, 2010, 2011).

Over the past two decades, a growing body of research has accumulated that suggests a positive relationship between self-efficacy and leadership behavior (Dimmock & Hattie, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Fisher, Frey, and Hattie (2016) rank collective efficacy as the number one factor influencing student achievement. In examining how principal self-efficacy and leadership influences the individual and collective efficacy of teachers, one finding suggests that principals influence teacher efficacy by articulating an inspiring vision of learning for their school; setting challenging but attainable goals; clarifying standards of teacher and pupil performance; fostering teacher learning and development; and coaching teachers for success (Hallinger et al., 2017).

Research shows that collective teacher efficacy has a positive effect on student achievement. Prelli (2018) suggests ways a leader could use the inverse relationship between transformational leadership and collective teacher efficacy in a school as a means to enhance performance. If the perceived collective teacher efficacy is high, a leader would be more facilitative, encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles. If the perceived collective efficacy is low, however, the leader would employ transformative leadership: direct modeling, developing a shared vision, building consensus to goals, and providing individual support as a way to promote higher levels of collective efficacy.

Leader-learning is conceptualized as a lifelong and life-wide affair. The lines between leadership, preparation, and development are becoming increasingly blurred. For example, there is a growing realization that principal preparation is not something that is

done at a particular point in time. Rather, it is a cumulative process of growth that happens as leaders traverse levels and experiences, and does not discount the need for more targeted development for specific positions but stresses the importance of continuous learning and building learning mindsets to lead in fluid situations (Walker, 2015). Leadership effects on student learning are achieved indirectly by shaping conditions that affect the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010a, 2010b; Leithwood et al., 2010). Also, schools that demonstrate a capacity for sustained school improvement have leadership that develops teacher capacity through meaningful professional learning (Leithwood, 1992; Liu & Hallinger, 2018).

Accountability

Research outcomes have led to suggested ways a leader could use the inverse relationship between transformational leadership and collective teacher efficacy as a means to enhance performance in a school (Prelli, 2018). Teacher learning does not just happen; it must be nurtured. Understanding how to motivate, support, and sustain teacher learning has, therefore, emerged as a high-value target for research. The recent literature views school as a social-learning environment (Walker, 2015). Ongoing learning opportunities often arise in the course of job-embedded activities in which teachers exchange ideas and share knowledge (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008).

Educational leaders are more aware of the combination of technical and personal qualities that are likely to lead to effective leadership in different schools, different contexts, and at different stages of development (Walker, 2005). Furthermore, leaders are more attentive to the importance of leadership as it plays out at different levels and in

different corners of the school. The first area of inquiry is an emphasis on distributed leadership, including teacher leadership, collective and collaborative approaches to leadership, and how these factors impact student-learning outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010a, 2010b; Spillane, 2012).

School Culture

Distributed leadership is concerned with the interactions among individuals (leaders and those whom they lead) to drive instructional improvement and improved student outcomes through the development of high-quality teaching and a culture where all students can thrive (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Bolman and Deal's (2013) theory of school culture defines culture as both a process and a product. By applying this theory in a school culture context, the product embodies wisdom accumulated from shared experiences. As a process, it is renewed and recreated as new members of the staff learn the established ways from veteran members. Newcomers eventually become veterans, and the process continues to be handed down.

Given that school culture is regarded as one of the crucial variables contributing to progressive school reform (DeMarco, 2018), Bolman and Deal (2013) posit that clear, well-understood goals, roles, relationships, and adequate coordination are essential to performance. Within the distributed model, effective structures promote the conditions that allow staff to be creative and build relationships that allow them to grow professionally. For example, if the structure is too loose, people go astray, with little sense of what others are doing, but rigid structures stifle flexibility and creativity and encourage people to waste time trying to beat the system (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

School leaders, both formal and informal, help shape the nature of school culture (Leithwood, 2006). Over time, the leadership framework a principal chooses to utilize will shape the school, positively or negatively. As Mees (2008) notes, "Without high-quality leadership, high-quality schools cannot exist" (p. 112). In further support of the role leadership plays in shaping a school's culture, an understanding of the concept of school culture is essential if leaders are to influence both culture and achievement. School leadership and culture are intertwined, and their relationship to self-efficacy, if one exists, must be examined (Davis & Leon, 2014).

The structure of a school must encourage teachers to believe that they can make a difference. DeMarco (2018) notes that there must be a willingness to be vulnerable and that cooperation and trust will set the stage for effective student learning. Once the right conditions have been established and the distributive processes set in motion, Fullan (2006) encourages leaders to trust the processes and the people in them. Leadership is not about making smart decisions and deal-making, least of all for personal gain. "It is about energizing other people to make good decisions and do other things. In other words, it is about helping release the positive energy that exists naturally within people. Effective leadership inspires more than empowers; it connects more than controls; it demonstrates more than it decides. It does all of this by engaging—itself above all and, consequently, others" (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 143 as quoted in Fullan, 2011, p. 128).

High-Quality Instruction

High-Quality Instruction (HQI) is an outcome-based manifestation of the components of teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom. As Sogunro (2017) observed, quality instruction is defined as the degree to which instruction is

adequately delivered, meets students' learning needs, learning styles, interests, expectations; and is well-aligned to standards. While the components of an HQI model may be different based on the definitions determined by various school districts, the common pedagogical components would include competency, adequate preparation and effective organizational skills; currency of knowledge of content; technological competence, resourcefulness, and instructors' dispositional attributes (Sogunro, 2017). Likewise, the focus on the teacher-student-task, as Elmore (2004) discusses in his Instructional Core model, is at the center of the HQI work.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to guide this single-case study is an amalgamation of the work by Gronn, Spillane, MacBeath, and Harris. Gronn's (2009) distributed leadership framework focuses on how leadership is distributed in context and explores how forms of leadership interact with one another within a "hybrid configuration" of practice. His framework views distributed leadership as spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relationships, and institutionalized practice (Gronn, 2015).

Similarly, Spillane (2006) focuses on the interpersonal dynamics of distributed leadership and the various ways in which people can collaborate to achieve shared outcomes. Spillane's work introduces collaboration around a shared mission/vision as a means for an effective distributed leadership framework. His framework views distributed leadership from collaborative, collective, and coordinated systems.

MacBeath's work (2005) centers on different forms of distributed leadership that are applicable in school settings. The relevant frames from MacBeath's study include the

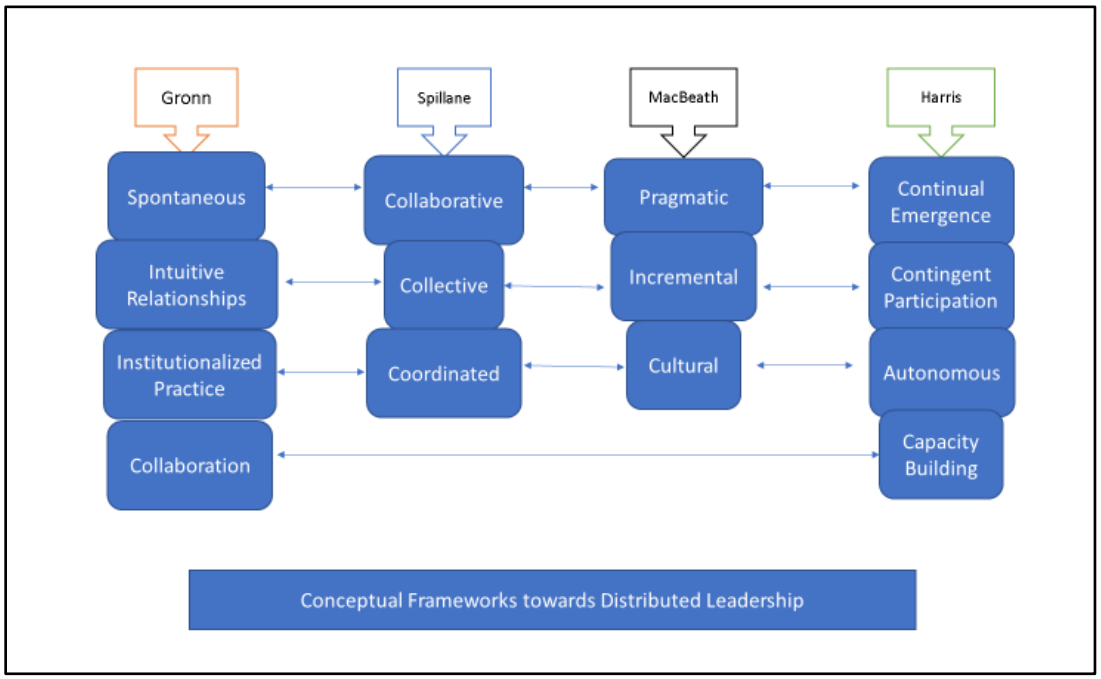
concepts of formal distribution. These concepts include roles in the organization; pragmatic distribution and opportunities for leadership based on expertise and the situation; incremental distribution regarding sharing leadership in stages that are consistent with the organization's development in a distributed leadership model; and cultural distribution by factoring in the culture as it relates to the receptivity of teachers in a distributed leadership model.

Finally, Harris' work (2004; 2012; 2014) identified several studies that indicate a positive relationship between distributed leadership and organizational change. Her work with Muijs (2003) identifies key characteristics of distributed leadership: such as a continual emergence so that distributed leadership is not static but instead is emerging and evolving with multiple participants and situations; participation-based so that emerging leaders and leadership teams are open and inclusive; autonomous so long as their work aligns with the organization's goals; and, fosters capacity building so that there is a fluidity to the distribution of leadership based on skillset and situation.

The blending of the above-referenced theories serves as the conceptual framework for this study (Gronn, 2015; Harris, 2004, 2012, 2014; MacBeath, 2005; Spillane, 2012).

Figure 2

A Blending of Distributed Leadership Theories



Connecting the Constructs

The focus of this research is the workings of a leadership team assembled in a suburban high school. The study evaluates the transformation from a traditional organizational structure to a distributed leadership model; furthermore, it examines the leadership team's struggles and successes in leading a school community both departmentally and as an organization in a distributed model towards improving instructional practices. The study investigates the practices inside and outside the classroom through collaboration around a high-quality instructional model that is identified from the district and articulated in the school's continuous improvement plan.

The study explores the opportunities created by building a collaborative and coordinated team and the team's perceptions around their collective and individual

efficacy in their role. Furthermore, the study examines the challenges created by the school's culture and climate as well as the inherent tension created for the leaders due to their lack of evaluative leverage with the faculty.

This group is truly middle-management. Their feelings regarding their ability to lead the work, by drawing strength from a shared purpose and collective support, are an integral part of this study. The elements of trust, shared purpose, and accountability are examined through the perceptions of the ten teacher-leaders in the study.

The work of MacBeath (2005) on creating a multi-stage process for distributed leadership is discussed in this case study through the narrative of the evolution of the distributed leadership model in the school, including the constitution of the present leadership team. Spillane's (2012) and Gronn's (2005) work around the collaborative nature of distributed leadership is also be explored as it relates to the case study participants contributing to the creation of a shared purpose for the school through the school's continuous improvement plan (SCIP) and their mutual work leading the faculty in support of that mission. As well, Harris' work (2004, 2012, 2014) on capacity building is explored by studying the perceptions of this leadership team, through their perceptions and how those perceptions relate to strengthening the collective efficacy of their departments, the leadership team, and the overall school community.

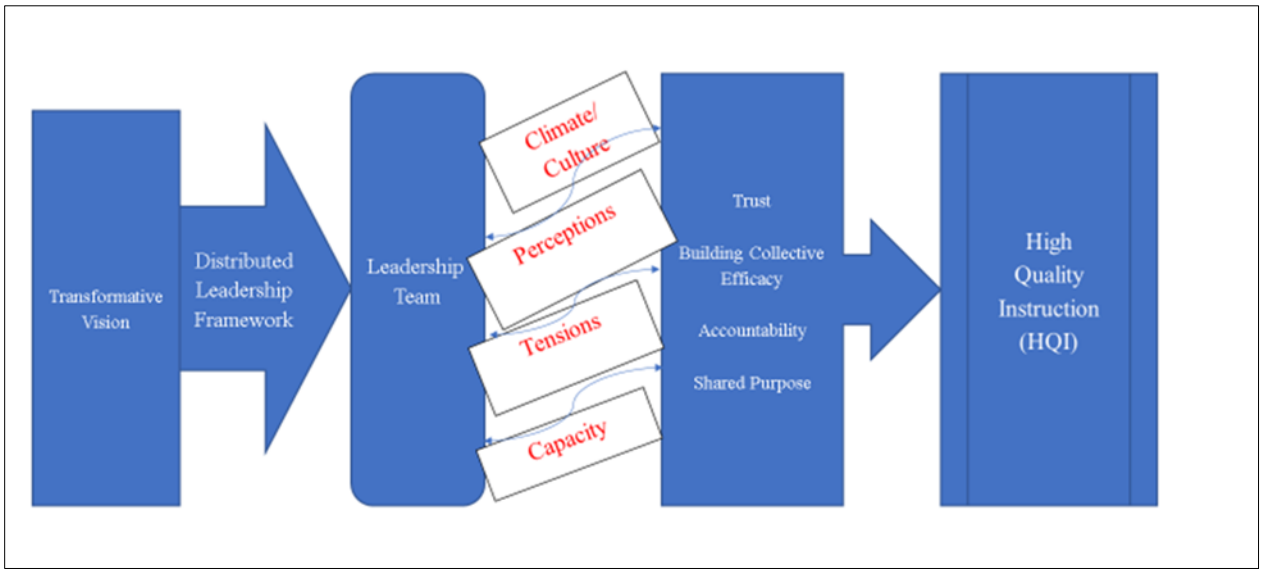
The convergence of the work of these pre-eminent scholars in the field of distributed leadership and its many components is referenced throughout the study. Their concepts of distributed leadership through the words, perceptions, and actions of the leadership team are explored. The common links of transforming an organizational

structure into a distributed leadership approach, including the development of the team, the culture of the school, and the capacity of those in leadership roles, are all explored.

The transferability of this case study to other schools is evaluated in the final chapter of this study. The strengths recognized in the model are identified for replication, and the challenges and missed opportunities are highlighted. The researcher hopes the outcome of this case study can be a blueprint for other systems looking to transition to a distributed leadership approach.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework of the Case Study of a Distributed Leadership Model in a High School Setting



Literature Gaps

There is a lack of research on the relationship between distributed leadership and instructional leadership. While there is a growing interest in, and importance of, distributed leadership in the enactment of instructional leadership, the scholarship that validates the significance of distributed leadership in terms of its presence in and interrelationship with instructional leadership is not abundantly available. Literature does

seem to point the direction towards distributed leadership as having the potential to unleash the success in instructional leadership for school improvement, yet very little empirical evidence has been established to show the relationship between the two constructs (Hairon & Goh, 2015). Interestingly, most of the studies to date have investigated these two leadership constructs independently.

Spillane and his colleagues posit that there is a pressing need for more studies on the operation of the concepts and analytical framework of distributed perspective of leadership based on observations in the field (Spillane, Healey, & Kim, 2010). Furthermore, there should be more leadership studies that go beyond school principals and include middle-level managers (e.g., heads of department) and teacher-leaders (Hairon & Goh, 2015). The evolution of traditional leadership authority to a distributed model that empowers department chairs as instructional leaders, observing the strengths, challenges, and opportunities, will add to and expand on the existing literature through the exploration of the middle-level managers and teacher-leaders. They are aspiring to lead and are demonstrating leadership in both formal and informal capacities.

Harris (2014) summarized the concept of transforming leadership into a distributed, formative model as an evolving process and, with it, comes a new paradigm in responsibilities:

> Distributed leadership is not the antidote to 'command and control' leadership or a much misunderstood, misaligned, and misrepresented alternative to it. It is not a panacea or some esoteric approach to leadership. It does not mean that everyone leads, and it is certainly not without its challenges. For example, there are the challenges of organizational trust, individual threat, and the fear of giving others

> real, authentic responsibility. With distributed leadership comes distributed accountability. It is not some open-ended approach to leadership; in fact, the converse is true. When distributed leadership works well, individuals are accountable and responsible for their leadership actions; new leadership roles are created, collaborative teamwork is the modus operandi, and interdependent working is a cultural norm. Distributed leadership is about collective influence—it is not just some accidental by-product of high performing organizations but is a contributor to school success and improved performance (p. 2).

Harris (2012) also noted that in many places, distributed models are still emerging, and there is more work to be done to understand the impact, both positive and negative, in school contexts. As Klar et al. (2016) observed in their comprehensive study, several scholars have noted the conspicuous lack of attention given to issues related to distributed leadership, such as power and influence, the impact of school context, and the inclusion or omission of various stakeholders in leadership activities (Bolden, 2011; Lumby, 2013; Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011; Torrance, 2014).

A distributed leadership approach to school improvement presupposes that principals know how to distribute leadership, that there are willing and able recipients for new or increased leadership responsibilities, and that this process will occur naturally and in an unproblematic fashion (Torrance, 2014). Likewise, the characteristics of the structural and cultural conditions that could enhance or restrict the adoption of distributed leadership have received less attention (Harris, 2004, 2012; Spillane & Louis, 2005). Day et al. (2011) reported that “much has been written about the nature, forms, and

desirability of distributed leadership in schools, but there has been much less which addresses how, when, and in what contexts it occurs" (p. 209).

Summary and Conclusions

Giles (2007) studied four leadership principles that Leithwood (2006) referenced as necessary for a distributive model to take hold in a school. These included: setting direction, developing people, designing the organization, and managing the instructional program. The theoretical framework of this study examines these principles from both organizational and instructional perspectives. *Setting direction* is the evolution from an organizational perspective examined from an evolutionary perspective and how the change to a distributed model impacted the school over five years. *Developing people* is studying the participants and their emerging roles as leaders in the school, along with the inherent tensions of their role in the school and in the district constricting their work as both teacher and teacher leader without the formal authority to evaluate the people in their departments. As such, the study employs role theory as a means to understand how this middle manager truly navigates their leadership role. Leithwood's (2006) condition of *designing the organization* is examined by employing Transformational Leadership Theory to understand how the school organization transforms from a traditional leadership model to a distributed leadership model.

As a phenomenological case study, this research examines how school leadership has transformed their roles in the process. As well, the study explores the conditions faced by the leadership team as they work to increase teacher efficacy towards a high-quality instructional model while navigating the school's culture and the middle management role they inhabit. Finally, to examine Leithwood's (2006) practice around

managing the instructional program, this study applies the theory of collective efficacy as it studies the perceptions of distributed leadership to improve instructional practices through building the capacity of all teachers toward High-Quality Instruction (HQI) to serve students best. The elements underlying each theory in this study include trust, capacity building, shared purpose and accountability, and their connection when employing a distributed leadership model in a school.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this single-case study is to examine the evolution of a suburban high school's organizational structure that has evolved from a traditional hierarchical management approach to a distributive leadership model; its impact on the assembled team of teacher-leaders (department chairs/instructional leadership team); and their perceptions as to their leadership capacity and their influence in the shaping of instructional practices. The study employs a qualitative, constructivist research design to explore their transformational journey to a distributed leadership model using a retrospective review of the emergence of the school's distributed leadership model over the past five years. Furthermore, the organizational changes in teacher leadership are reviewed, including the work done by the principal to build a cohesive leadership team and the team's perceptions of their leadership ability, autonomy, and collective efficacy to improve instruction in their classrooms and among their colleagues.

The initial data collection is an anonymous survey, administered to the participants, to ascertain current perceptions of the ten teacher-leaders/department chairs regarding instructional leadership opportunities in the school. This survey measures the leadership teams' attitudes and perceptions of what is necessary to create an environment and culture that fosters distributive leadership conducive to increased instructional efficacy. It drills down into the opinions of the participants regarding leadership, opportunities to lead, and how the implementation of a distributed model is impacting instructional practices as well as the cultural barriers (evident and perceived) to the

development of human capital and sustained implementation of the Distributed Leadership Model. The responses are coded as patterns and themes emerge.

Research Design and Rationale

Yin (1994) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary issue within its everyday context, especially when the boundaries between the issue and the environment are not clearly evident which is consistent with the intention of this case study research: to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of a group of high school teacher-leaders regarding the challenges and power inherent in operating within a distributed leadership model. This explanation is consistent with the researcher's interpretive epistemological outlook: that meaning is created by one's lived experiences.

The following questions guided this research:

- What factors contribute to an educational institution's transition from a traditional leadership model to a distributed/shared leadership model that fosters high-quality instruction?
- How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in the transition?
- How does the culture of the educational institution influence the transition to the distributed/shared leadership model?

While the primarily focus was studying the capacity building achieved through the distributed leadership of mid-level, non-evaluating teacher leaders, a subset of questions was also explored.

- How does a distributed leadership model impact collective teacher efficacy?

- How does a distributed leadership model impact a school in building and strengthening instructional capacity?

The epistemological paradigm most suited for this study is a constructivist (interpretive) approach that seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors (Cohen et al., 2000; Mansour, 2011). Moreover, this paradigm allows the participants' perspectives and experiences to emerge as they interpret the meaning of objects and actions in the world and then act upon those interpretations based on the meaning created (Verma & Mallick, 1999). The research is based on the interpretation of the interviewees' perceptions of how distributed leadership fosters the capacity building of teachers to provide high-quality instruction in their classrooms; and if their emerging roles as leaders have fostered an increase in instructional capacity among the school faculty. Following this interpretive paradigm, the research questions are interpreted through the lived and shared experiences of those in the case study (Creswell, 2005).

Qualitative research methods are concerned with interpretation and exploring assumptions, feelings, and the meaning of systems in everyday situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There is a need to study teachers and students in their natural setting (the school) because human actions are influenced by the setting in which they occur. Therefore, the participants and their behaviors are being studied in a real-life professional environment, going to the field, gaining access, and gathering material through interviews and observations (Creswell 2005).

As a result of the researcher's epistemological outlook, the study employs a qualitative design that reviews the responses inductively for themes, patterns, and interpretations. The ascription of meaning to observed phenomena is the key to the

process. This case study research is based on the interpretation of those participating, their perceptions of their leadership-capacity, and their perceived influence as leaders to the delivery of high-quality instructional practices in their school. Interpretation is essential because it is believed that an individual's interpretation of reality leads them to certain actions (Mansour, 2011).

Merriam (1998) also believes the epistemology that should orient the qualitative case study is constructivism. She maintains that "the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based in the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (p. 6). In the same vein, she comments that "reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality" (p. 22). Therefore, the main focus of qualitative research is to understand the meaning or knowledge constructed by the people being observed. This approach takes the reader out of the construction of meaning in the study and places that construct in the researcher's interpretation as it interacts with the participants' interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation (Yazan, 2015).

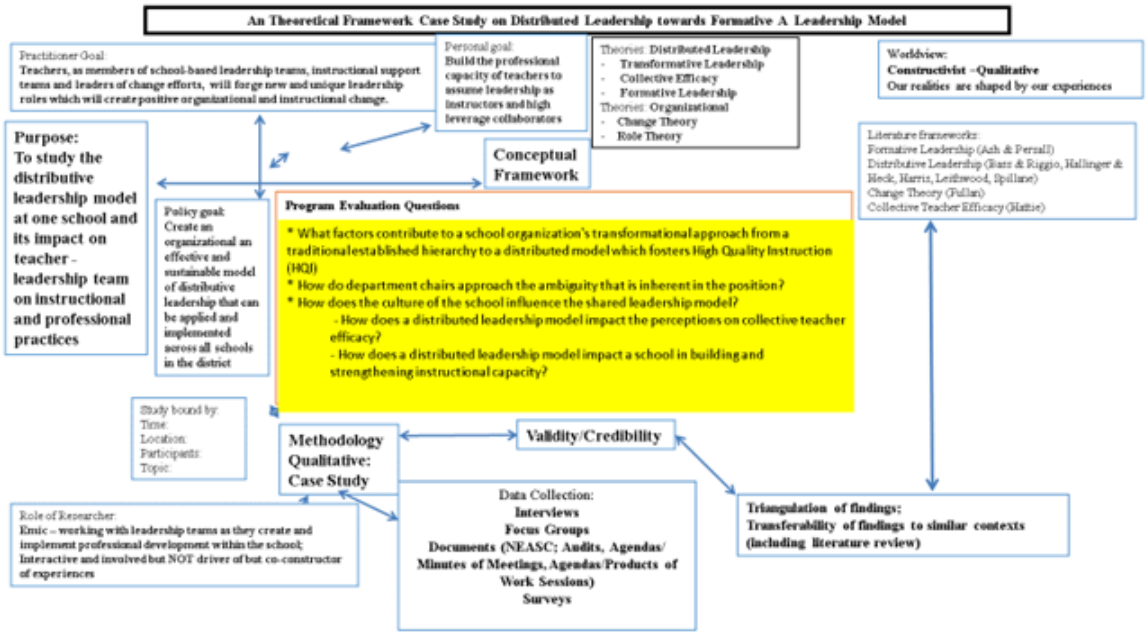
In this case study, the ten suburban high school department chairs are non-evaluating, teacher-leaders, who have been selected by the principal, following an application process, as the school has shifted to a distributed leadership model. Their roles have evolved into the school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Their perceptions of their roles as leaders are studied in addition to the phenomenon of distributed leadership, and their leadership in the model, as a conduit for building high-quality instructional capacity—through a constructivist lens.

These ten department chairs have assumed a greater leadership role through the implementation of a distributed leadership model that has emerged over the past three to five years. This group, now in its third year together in a leadership role, plays a primary role in the study of their school's organizational shift from a traditional hierarchical model to a distributed leadership model. The implications of this transformative shift occur through the analysis of the survey data and other artifacts such as public documents from various program evaluations of the district and the school. The role of the researcher cannot be completely unbiased because the researcher has introduced the distributed leadership model at the school and has appointed the members of this leadership team. Therefore, the researcher assumes an emic perspective in working with the department chairs to further the leadership model to build the collective efficacy of the faculty beyond their capacity as instructors in their classrooms.

The anonymity of the participants is paramount, and safeguards have been established, including having survey responses vetted by an independent review to ensure that any identifiable information in the responses has been removed.

Figure 4

Concept Map of the Study



Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, it is vital for the researcher to reveal his background as it relates to the selected topic (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). Doing so allows the reader to put the findings into the context of the experiences of the researcher (Putman, 2012). The researcher straddles a unique perspective in this case study. While the researcher is part of the high school team, the perspective brought by the researcher serves only to provide a five-year retrospective of the evolution of the organizational changes towards a distributed leadership approach. Therefore, while the researcher is involved in the leadership of the organization, the construction of meanings observed, investigated, and reported on are observed and recounted by the members of the team under study. Their perceptions and the data collected through the anonymous in-depth

surveys seek to capture their meaning of the evolving model of distributed leadership and its impact on creating instructional efficacy for all teaching staff.

The researcher assumes an interpretive/constructivist worldview, whereby meaning is made and shaped through encountered experiences. The interpretivist/ constructivist researcher tends to rely on the participants' views of the situation being studied and recognizes the impact on the research of their own background and experiences. Constructivists generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings throughout the research process (Creswell, 2005). As the meanings (perceptions) of the study are from the perspective of the subjects involved, the researcher will employ an emic view because the meanings constructed will come from those participants on the leadership team. Studies conducted from an emic perspective often include more detailed and culturally rich information because the observer places themselves within the culture of the intended study; they go further in-depth on the details of practices and beliefs of a society that may otherwise have been ignored (Olive, 2014).

The researcher, also the principal of this school, selected the group in the study to be the department chairs and has offered them training as the transformation to a distributed leadership model evolved. This dual role, assumed by the researcher, created an inherent tension. To prevent this tension, the researcher employed an etic perspective by refraining from participation as a member of the study and not participating in the survey; thus, preserving the validity and objectivity of the research. As stated previously, the primary focus is on the perceptions of the ten members of the leadership team.

Regarding bias, the researcher freely acknowledges that, as the principal of the school, there is an inherent power differential between the researcher and the participants. While this limitation could create a significant bias in other forms of qualitative research, because of the general phenomenological nature of this study, the researcher's involvement adds context to the historical underpinnings of the participants' conscious perceptions. However, to mitigate bias and preserve the anonymity of the participants, a consultant who has worked with the district for three years as part of professional capacity work with school leaders, reviewed the respondents' answers to ensure any potentially identifiable information is redacted. This involvement adds to the ability to establish the validity of the responses and to analyze responses in light of contextual evidence.

In qualitative research, the divergence between emic and etic perspectives is perceived to be an opportunity rather than a limitation. Oliver (2014) notes the argument that etic and emic, the universal and the historical particular, are not separate kinds of understanding when one person makes sense of another. They are both part of any understanding. In this way, the very differences themselves can prove fruitful, as Yin (2010) has explained: "a common theme underlying many qualitative studies is to demonstrate how participants' perspectives may diverge dramatically from those held by outsiders" (p. 13).

Methodology

Qualitative research is strongly tied to the phenomenological approach; in other words, the researcher is seeking to understand what meaning certain events have on individuals in particular situations. It focuses on why something has had a particular

effect on people and what understanding can be drawn from those experiences. The primary purpose is to understand the experience of an individual or group of individuals from the perspective of those who have participated (Putman, 2012). This study is a single-case study, examining a specific phenomenon—the transformation to a distributed model of leadership in a suburban high school setting. Additionally, this study examines the role the teacher-leaders play in leading their departments towards high-quality instruction, building collective teacher efficacy, and navigating the culture of the school in this organizational shift. As well, the study explores the conditions necessary to move toward a more focused distributed model that builds collective teacher efficacy through collaborative practices and empowers teachers to assume leadership roles, both formally and informally.

This research design evolves and unfolds based on the emergence of the data collected. The collection of the data, includes a detailed survey, which includes open-ended, reflective questions, and a review of existing documents such as accreditation reports, commissioned coherence and capacity program reviews, and state published data. The five research questions that guide this study are best addressed in a natural setting using exploratory and descriptive approaches (Creswell 2005).

The goal of the research is to examine a distributed leadership model and its impact on empowering teacher-leaders and their work in building collective efficacy among the faculty they work with, and in their school as an instructional institution. The objective is to understand the conditions through the perceptions of these identified leaders (department chairs) and the work that is occurring in this distributed leadership

model. An interpretive approach is used to explore the participants' views and the impact the distributed leadership model is having on their work as teacher-leaders

The methods used to answer the research questions include a comprehensive anonymous survey that will be distributed to all ten members along with data collected through public sourced documents such as program evaluations of the school district and the school itself (conducted by district consultants and school accreditation committees, respectively). Ensuring the validity of this design includes working with the Human Resources Department to create an environment where the participants feel safe in their participation, where they can remove themselves from the study at any time. An environment where they can freely express their views and perceptions using an anonymous survey. Participants' confidentiality is further protected by having a non-evaluator, a consultant employed by the district, review the responses and redact any personally identifiable information. Following this process, the researcher will code the responses to look for emerging themes that would likely be generalizable and transferable to other school settings considering an organizational shift to a distributed leadership model.

Figure 5

Interactive Model of the Research Design (Creswell, 2005)

Participants were asked to reflect on the relationships and interactions of departmental actors regarding the professional discourse of instruction and shared leadership within the organization. The researcher concurs with Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) that with the distribution of leadership responsibility for the organization, there is harmony and disharmony. This study examined the inherent tension of the leadership team's "in the middle" role within the organizational chart, including the challenges and frustrations they face as they navigate their leadership roles towards building collective teacher efficacy in their departments as a lever for achieving the shared goal of high-quality instruction for all students.

Population

Participation in this study was confined to individuals comprising the school's instructional leadership team, a term given to the group by the principal based on their role as departmental teacher-leaders—a stipend position with a full teaching load. These ten participants comprise a predetermined group limiting the case study to a specific number of participants, consistent with the phenomenological view of Moustakas (1994) that "the world is a community of persons," where individuals "experience and know the other in the sense of empathy and co-presence" (p. 57) as they share similar positions in the organization (as cited in Klein, 2014).

Evolution of Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)

The team in this study was constituted three years ago. Each department chair applied for this stipend position and was appointed by the principal who began the transformation to a distributed leadership model five years ago. In his ninth year in the position, the principal inherited an organization that utilized a traditional, hierarchical model. Several changes in personnel as department chairs have occurred over the ensuing years as the principal began to formulate a more distributed approach to managing and leading the school. The school district was similarly reorganizing around an instructional model where full-time district instructional supervisors (administrators) were hired and assumed roles that had formerly been taken on by teachers, who, while not evaluators, assumed curriculum writing and other instructional management tasks. The school-based leadership resided with the principal and the assistant principal(s), in the case of secondary schools.

The team began by establishing group norms that are revisited regularly. Of primary importance are the norms centering on the concepts of trust and collective support. The team now creates agendas, and minutes are recorded using shared Google Docs that can be accessed and updated in real-time. Over the years, the team has done several book studies on organizational leadership including, "*Turn the Ship Around!*" by L. David Marquet (2012); "*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*," by Patrick Lencioni (2002); "*Good to Great*" by Jim Collins (2001) and, most recently, the team read an excerpt from "*Accelerate*," by John Kotter (2014). From the Kotter book, the team created a "Big Opportunity" statement that will be the primary focus for the school's Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) during the duration of this study.

Sampling

The selected population is intentional, based on the participants' role as department chairs working as a collective group. The diverse teams (departments) they lead and their perceptions of their leadership capacity and efficacy are explored in this research. The group has evolved into the current constituency over a decided period of change at the school from a traditional, hierarchical organizational model to its current distributed leadership iteration. The work of the team, both individually and collectively, is the basis for understanding the research questions posed to the team members in the study.

Participation

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary. The participants were given a consent form approved by the IRB and also the Human Resources Department of the school district. Furthermore, the participants responded to a substantial and

comprehensive anonymous survey (approved by the school's IRB, Appendix D) that was examined by an independent reviewer to ensure that there was no personally identifiable information contained in the responses. Participants exited the study following the submission of their survey. Upon the completion of the dissertation, the case study participants will receive a copy of the study, formally closing out their role in the study.

Data Collection

The research findings are presented in the participants' own words, designed to demonstrate the consistency of their views and opinions. The use of direct quotes avoids "imposing on participants a 'fictional view of their reality' (Minichiello et al. 1990, p. 94). Moreover, using the language of the participants served as a 'check against straying from the substance of the data' (Rennie et al. 1998, p. 143)" (quoted from Mansour, 2011, p. 79). The researcher sought to discover themes and patterns of leadership capacity that occur in the particular context of this study. To enhance the confidence in the research findings, the researcher will show evidence of the four components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Curtin & Fossey, 2007).

The group was asked to explore their perceptions of their leadership role and their ability to lead the school in a high-quality instructional model through an in-depth anonymous survey. Participants have been intentionally selected based on their leadership role in the organization. Finally, a trained consultant, employed by the district, reviewed the survey responses, prior to the coding process, to ensure there is no personally identifiable information was contained.

Archival Data

Archival data were examined as source evidence in order to provide a historical perspective on the transition to the distributed leadership model implemented in the school. Furthermore, data were used as evidence of the changing personnel in leadership roles and the work done to build a guiding coalition of leaders that create both collective efficacy as leaders and build capacity within their departmental teams. These data include the New England Association of Secondary Schools (NEASC) accreditation report from 2017; a Capacity and Coherence Audit commissioned by the district in 2017–2018; agendas and minutes from data and leadership team meetings over five years; end of the year staff surveys, completed by the district, on questions of teachers' voice in instructional practices and leadership opportunities; and, school improvement plans created by the current leadership team over the past three years. Any identifiable data points will be redacted to ensure anonymity.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Following a thorough review of case studies and research papers in the field of distributed leadership in schools, the researcher sought and obtained permission for two sources of data collection for this qualitative study.

The first section of the survey instrument chosen for this study was adapted, with permission, from The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP). CSTP is an organization in Olympia, Washington, whose mission is to support student achievement through a focus on teaching excellence. CSTP states that "We don't believe good teaching happens by accident, but that high-quality teaching occurs when there is a strong system and a strong profession that supports teachers" (2019, p. 1) (Appendix A).

The second section of the survey was adapted from the 2014 work of Dr. Jennie Weiner, Associate Professor at the University of Connecticut, *Disabling Conditions: Investigating Instructional Leadership Teams in Action*.

Weiner's 2014 study investigated why and how principals selected members for their instructional leadership team (ILT) and how this selection criteria and process may have impacted the understandings of, and behaviors of the team members. Qualitative methods were used to explore team members' perceptions regarding the team's purpose, function, and selection criteria, as well as how these perceptions seemed to impact the behavior of the team members. (Appendix B)

Threats to Validity

External Validity

Mitigating threats to external validity, that is, ensuring that the findings of the study can be generalizable beyond this flexible, qualitative case study (Yin, 2009), were undertaken by using distributed leadership theory. The purpose is to study the phenomena of a transformation to a distributed leadership model in a high school setting and the perceptions of the identified leadership team in their work as leaders of departments and leaders of teachers within their school. As such, this study is an opportunity to view the impact of distributed leadership as a point for further study and possible implementation at other school organizations.

It has been argued that the use of one case is similar to the use of one experiment, in the sense that neither one is sufficient to reject or disprove propositions, and that several are necessary to demonstrate the accuracy of a theory. In other words, "case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to

populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a ‘sample’, and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories and not to enumerate frequencies [statistical generalization]” (Yin, 2009, p. 10). This case study can be replicated in other school settings and provide insights and implications to school and district administrators for greater leadership opportunities in schools, both formally and informally, among teaching staff.

Also, strategies for ensuring the reliability of case studies include the creation of the case study protocol and the development of a case study database (Yin, 2009). The case study protocol used in this research contributes to the reliability by standardizing the investigation. Relevant documents include an overview of the project, field procedures, and guiding questions, all approved by the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Internal Validity

Studies completed from an emic perspective can create a bias on the part of the researcher, especially if that individual is a member of the culture they are studying, failing to keep in mind how their practices are perceived by others and possibly causing valuable information to be omitted. The emic perspective serves the purpose of providing detailed, in-depth reports about how *the insiders* of a culture understand their rituals. The current study was intentionally focused on the perceptions of the ten participants who are the teacher-leaders comprising the school’s instructional leadership team. Their reflections and perceptions were captured and used as the data points for this study. In order to capture their reflections as accurately as possible, the researcher used their own words from an in-depth, anonymous survey. Furthermore, the researcher, though part of

the administrative group, did not focus on his role in the distributive leadership paradigm, but instead used only his perspective as part of the school learning community to offer context regarding the evolution of the distributed leadership model.

Yin (2009) addresses a concern over the internal validity, in case study research, to a broad problem of making inferences. Yin observes that a case study involves an inference every time an event cannot be observed directly. A researcher will infer that a particular event resulted from some earlier occurrence, based on the interview and documentary evidence collected as part of the case study. To navigate the threats to internal validity, the researcher used pattern matching (coding); explanation building (re-interviewing participants for clarification and using the retrospective study of the organization as evidence for explanations); and used logic models (review patterns from the history of the organizational models being explored) as a means to reduce the threats to internal validity.

Triangulation is a strategy to enhance trustworthiness and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation through the use of multiple sources and different participants that draw upon multiple perspectives to reduce systematic bias. It enables the development of a more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of a real-life situation. Any finding in a case study is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several sources of information, following a corroboratory model (Yin, 2009). Acknowledging that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation also serves to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is being seen (Creswell, 2005; Flick, 1998; Yin, 1994). The researcher applied methodological triangulation by document analysis, surveys, and minutes from leadership meetings. Triangulation also sheds light

upon common themes found in different sources (Creswell, 2005) and strengthens dependability and credibility (Merriam, 1998).

Case-study research aims to capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than use them as a basis for wider generalization. This requires a narrative approach where the wider relevance of findings is conceptualized in terms of the provision of vicarious experience, as a basis of naturalistic generalization or transferability (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000). The underlying challenges and successes of the team guide the study and its findings. Ultimately, the case study reflects the cultural and systemic struggles found among teacher-leaders. While the researcher hopes to capture the value found in how this group navigates their role, given the dynamics in the school setting, this study does not purport to have a solution to distributed leadership in a school. Instead, the researcher's goal is to capture the shift in the organizational model where the emphasis is on strengthening instructional efficacy through collaboration and distribution of leadership among the school's faculty. Therefore, the findings of this case study may become transferable, and readers should be able to determine if the findings can be applied to other contexts (Curtin & Fossey, 2007).

Construct Validity

A potential vulnerability of the single-case design, as noted in Yin (2009), is that a case may not turn out to be the case it was thought to be at the outset. Single-case designs, therefore, require careful investigation of the potential case to minimize the chances of misrepresentation and to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence. This case study employed multiple sources of evidence, including survey responses and artifacts from accrediting and consulting agencies, to establish a chain of

evidence to ensure validity. Most importantly, the researcher used the participant's written responses as data of their espoused perceptions, and also had the study reviewed by constituents, familiar with the organization.

Yin further notes that "such a review is essential to identifying and corroborating the essential facts and evidence presented in the case study report" (2009, p. 183). The participants may ultimately disagree with the researcher's conclusions and interpretations, but they should *not* disagree over the actual facts of the case. If such disagreement emerges during the review process, however, the researcher knows that the case study report is not finished. Such disagreements must be settled, and the researcher must search for further evidence. An anonymous in-depth survey using the Survey Monkey platform was employed so that no identifiable URL could be obtained. From a methodological standpoint, the corrections made through this process enhance the accuracy of the case study, thus increasing the construct validity of the study (Yin, 2009).

Ethical Procedures

The relationship and intimacy that exists between researchers and the participants in qualitative studies can raise a range of different ethical concerns, and qualitative researchers face dilemmas such as respect for privacy, establishment of honest and open interactions, and avoiding misrepresentations (Warusznski, 2002). The researcher realized the power differential between his role, of building principal, and that of the participants when examining the perceptions of the leadership team from the anonymous in-depth survey sent to the participants. Participation in the case study was strictly voluntary and overseen by the district's Human Resource Director to ensure that no potential participant felt unduly pressured to be part of the study.

Ethically challenging situations may emerge if researchers have to deal with contradicting issues and choose between different methodological strategies. In such cases, disagreements among different elements such as participants, researchers, researchers' discipline, and society may be inevitable (Punch, 1994; Truscott, 2004). Since this study focused on the perceptions of the participants as a leadership team, the researcher felt confident that the group would engage in honest and reflective participation. The researcher's work with the team (prior to, and not relating to, the study) centered around organizational capacity building, goal setting, and leading adult learners towards high-quality instructional practices. This study is a natural continuation of the team's ongoing professional leadership work.

Informed consent has been recognized as an integral part of ethics in research carried out in different fields. For qualitative researchers, it is of the utmost importance to specify in advance which data will be collected and how they are to be used (Hoeyer, Dahlager, & Lynöe, 2005). All participants had the opportunity to: read the study proposal, understand the safeguards used to ensure their anonymity and the school's, and opt-out at any time in the process. The principle of informed consent stresses the researcher's responsibility to thoroughly inform participants of different aspects of the research in comprehendible language. Clarifications include the following issues: the nature of the study, the participants' potential role, the identity of the researcher and the financing body, the objective of the research, and how the results will be published and used (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

Mansour (2011) states that the development of personal relationships with participants may be inevitable while collecting certain data. Therefore, researchers should

seriously consider the potential impact they may have on the participants and vice versa, and details of such interactions should be clearly outlined in research proposals. According to Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, and Cheraghi, “Overall, the role of the researcher as (a) stranger, (b) visitor, (c) initiator, (d) insider-expert or other, should be well defined and explained” (2014, p. 4). They further suggest that preparing an ethical protocol can cover issues in a qualitative research project from planning through reporting.

The researcher of this study cannot avoid the personal relationships that have been cultivated with the team being studied. Nor can he ignore the power differential in the relationship between himself and those in the study. He hired them and placed them in the leadership positions at the school as part of a distributed leadership model. That said, by measuring their perceptions of the impact of their leadership in this distributed leadership model, their responses are not only anonymous but also non-evaluative and an extension of their ongoing professional work. Furthermore, the study looks to assess the conditions for teacher-leaders to move the staff towards a High-Quality Instructional model (HQI) that will be transferable beyond this single-case study. The diversity of personnel in this study, their diverse expertise, their experience level as leaders, and the dynamics of their department instructional teams, will all play into their perceptions, challenges, and aspirations as leaders. Again, this has the power to be transferable to other schools for their organizational consideration.

Researchers should always be aware of the precise reason for their involvement in a study in order to prevent undesirable personal issues (Sanjari et al., 2014). As this is a case study examining the perceptions of teacher-leaders in a distributed leadership model,

the researcher, who is the principal of the school, remains part of the narrative. This study, however, focused on the leadership of ten teacher-leaders and their work in a distributed model. The probability of exposure to vicarious trauma as a result of their participation needs to be evaluated. The use of an anonymous, in-depth survey where participants could stop and resume during the collection window allowed for sufficient recovery time. It reduced the risk of emotional exhaustion while allowing ample time for analysis of the objective and emotional aspects of the research. It was also necessary for the researcher to be familiar with signs of extreme fatigue and be prepared to take necessary measures before too much harm was done (Sanjari et al., 2014). The researcher ensured the safety and well-being of all participants in the study by having the Human Resources Department serve as a check for the participants throughout the process, ensuring that they felt safe and agreeable in continuing to be part of the study.

All responses are confidential, and all surveys were vetted by a professional consultant prior to the coding phase to ensure the anonymity of the participants

Any archival data, such as accreditation reports, minutes of leadership meetings, and district coherence audits, public documents/information are available in the public domain for anyone to access. At the completion of this study process, all non-public data will be destroyed as soon as allowed by the University's Institutional Review Board guidelines.

Summary

This case study examined the perceptions of ten teacher-leaders who serve as an instructional leadership team in their school as part of a distributed leadership model designed to increase instructional quality through building collective teacher efficacy. To

that end, this case study explored five research questions: (1) What factors contribute to an educational institution's transition from a traditional leadership model to a distributed/shared leadership model that fosters high-quality instruction? (2) How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in this transition? (3) How does the culture of the educational institution influence the transition to the distributed/shared leadership model? (4) How does a distributed leadership model impact collective teacher efficacy? and (5) How does a distributed leadership model impact a school in building and strengthening instructional capacity?

Participant data were collected using an in-depth anonymous survey. The collected data and retrospective artifacts were gathered and analyzed, including the recent school accreditation report, a district coherence and capacity review report, and minutes from leadership team meetings.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the beliefs of the participants through the exploration of their perceptions, in their role as department chairs, in a distributed leadership organizational model. As well, the research questions posed for this study are examined through the answers provided by these participants. The emergent themes, discussed in terms of the participants and their relationship to the following five research questions, guided this study. All responses were transcribed, as described in Chapter III.

Research Question 1: What factors contribute to an educational institution's transition from a traditional leadership model to a distributed/shared model that fosters high-quality instruction?

Research Question 2: How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in this transition?

Research Question 3: How does the culture of the educational institution influence the transition to the distributed/shared leadership model?

Research Question 4: How does a distributed leadership model impact collective teacher efficacy?

Research Question 5: How does a distributed leadership model impact a school in building and strengthening instructional capacity?

The intent of the survey tool (Appendix C) created for the case study was to allow the teacher-leaders to share their perceptions of the impact of a distributed leadership model on their work as instructional leaders in their departments and the school. In addition to the survey, artifacts related to the school structure and subsequent distributed leadership model were examined, including the school's decennial accreditation report, the district's coherence and capacity review, and minutes of leadership team meetings.

Data Collection

Data were collected during the spring semester of the 2019–2020 school year. An anonymous survey was administered to the participants in order to ascertain their perceptions of the instructional leadership opportunities as teacher-leaders/department chairs in the school.

The 104-question survey, based on research, and with permission from The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP) and Dr. Jennie Weiner, measured the leadership teams' attitudes and perceptions of what is necessary to create an environment and culture that fosters distributive leadership that is conducive to increasing instructional efficacy. The anonymous survey was sent to an intentional group of ten participants, comprised of the department chairs at this suburban high school. The participants are identified in the school as the instructional leadership team. This group works as both teacher leaders in their departments, and collectively as an instructional leadership team.

SurveyMonkey was the chosen platform for administration, and all ten participants participated in the survey. Furthermore, the survey drilled down into the opinions held around leadership, opportunities to lead, and how implementing a distributed model impacted instructional practices. The survey also asked the participants

to identify the barriers (evident and perceived) to the development of human capital and sustained implementation of the Distributed Leadership Model based on the culture of the school community.

As noted previously, participation in this study was confined to ten individuals who comprise the school's instructional leadership team. This term, given to the group by the principal, is based on their role as departmental teacher-leaders (a stipend position with a full teaching schedule and no formal evaluative authority). The ten participants created an intentional sample as a pre-determined group; therefore, the study is limited to a specific number of participants, consistent with the phenomenological view that the world is a community of persons: "Where individuals experience and know the other in the sense of empathy and co-presence as they share similar positions in the organization" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 57, as cited in Klein, 2014). All department chairs participated in the leadership survey with no department chair abstaining. Also, at least 70% of the sample responded to every question, with most of the questions having a high response rate.

The department chairs are not representative of all teachers in the school. An application process was employed to choose them for these leadership positions, and several have replaced former chairpersons who continue to teach in the school. These factors may contribute to their varying degrees of perceived leadership efficacy within the group, as the climate and culture in each department differs based on the diverse dispositions of the population of teachers they lead. Moreover, this group has engaged in leadership work, including book studies of *Good to Great* by Jim Collins (2001), *Turn the Ship Around* by L. David Marquet (2012), and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by

Patrick Lencioni (2002). They have also attended a series of leadership retreats led by the building principal and have worked together to create the school's continuous improvement plan (SCIP), leading faculty workshops, and setting agendas for department-led instruction time (DLT).

The researcher analyzed the responses from the 104-question survey through the process of coding to make sense of the textual data. The data were then divided into coded segments. Codes were then examined for overlap and redundancy and collapsed into broader themes (Creswell, 2012). According to Spillane et al., "We need to observe from within a conceptual framework if we are to understand the internal dynamics of leadership practice" (2004, p. 4). Due to the complexity of distributed leadership, it was difficult to categorize themes across clean lines; therefore, some themes have crossed over into other constructs. Coding allowed the researcher to assign the shorthand designation to various aspects of the data to retrieve specific data more efficiently (Merriam, 2001).

Coding commenced by organizing the data provided in the participants' responses, looking for patterns. In Vivo coding was employed in the first coding cycle to link the Likert-scale questions with relevant open-ended/free-response questions. From there, participants' responses (words and phrases) were coded based on similarities of meaning (See Appendix E for the coding process by research question).

Coding continued as meaning emerged based on the relational coding process. This work led to the second cycle of coding, where the axial coding was used to find deeper relational connections from the data. At the end of the axial coding process, three

major themes emerged: shared purpose, shared accountability, and trust. All three major themes are discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to this primary data source, the researcher reviewed the school's 2017 decennial accreditation report from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC, 2017), examined minutes from Instructional Leadership Team meetings, and reviewed the data available from the district's Coherence and Capacity review conducted by an independent educational consulting firm. All documents were coded to provide evidentiary documentation related to the study's essential research questions.

Study Results

The transition to a distributed leadership model resulted from the documented recommendation of a need to establish coherence and capacity among district administration, building administration, and teaching staff. The 2017 Standards for Accreditation report (NEASC, 2017) reflected the disconnect occurring at the school level and also between the school and the district in establishing a collaborative environment where stakeholders could lead instructional conversations and effect change in the classroom and the school. This disconnect was starkly noted in the finding of the leadership standard concerning shared leadership/collaboration, 2017 Accreditation Report—Standard 5—Indicator 10 (NEASC, 2017, p. 66):

> A limited number of teachers are encouraged to exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. The district funded PLC facilitation training for selected teachers. Some department heads facilitate district-level PLCs, but this is dependent on the

> individual relationships established between the school department heads and supervisors for curriculum and instruction, resulting in inconsistent expectations of department heads. Additionally, department heads are responsible for facilitating school-based PLCs. However, no formal processes or expectations such as common agendas or minutes exist, resulting in an inconsistent focus on improving the school and increasing student engagement in learning.

Furthermore, the decision making at the building level was reflective of the inconsistent coherence among district- and school-level administrators. As noted in the 2017 Standards for Accreditation Report, specifically in the standard regarding decision making autonomy—Standard 5—Indicator 11 (NEASC, 2017, p. 67):

> The principal has autonomy in decision making involving the management of day-to-day procedures within the building and community outreach. However, the staff communicated that the principal and central office are not consistently on the same page in achieving the school's 21st century learning. District supervisors and central office staff, independent of the principal, are writing courses and curriculum, […] Program of Studies, and making decisions regarding renewal of employees. When school and district leaders effectively collaborate, communicate, and participate in reflective and constructive decision making, the school community will be better poised to support all students in achieving 21st century learning expectations.

While the school was undergoing its accreditation review, the district embarked on a Capacity and Coherence Audit. The correspondence from the Superintendent of Schools, at the time, noted some of the findings (See Figure 6).

Figure 6

May 27, 2017—Letter to the Entire District Staff from the Superintendent of Schools

In late February/early March, we engaged in a Capacity and Coherence Audit conducted by staff from the [state] Center of School Change (*CSC). Most of you participated in either completing a survey or being interviewed by *CSC staff. Thank you for taking part in this process.

I am writing to you to share the key results – the "big takeaways" of the audit. Before sharing these, I want to remind everyone of the goal of the audit, why (the district) chose to engage in it, and how the audit was conducted.

Primary Goal of the Audit – To examine systems, structures, routines, policies, etc. that enable or constrain district improvement, i.e., improving teaching, learning, and outcomes for students, including closing gaps.

Why Did We Participate? – To learn how well we operate as a school system to enable school and classroom improvements to take hold.

Key Findings:

Everyone in [the district] is working very hard. People care about their work and want to improve. There are lots of thoughtful, intentional people.

Lots of areas of work are being pursued with earnestness. But…

Our instructional priorities are not clear.

The degree of urgency toward system-wide improvement tied to raising achievement is inconsistent. There seem to be many improvement strategies, but how they connect is not always clear.

Some variation in degrees of trust exists in the system; collaborative practices within and between buildings and departments are not always evident.

Communication lines beginning with the central office and across buildings are sometimes ineffective or confusing.

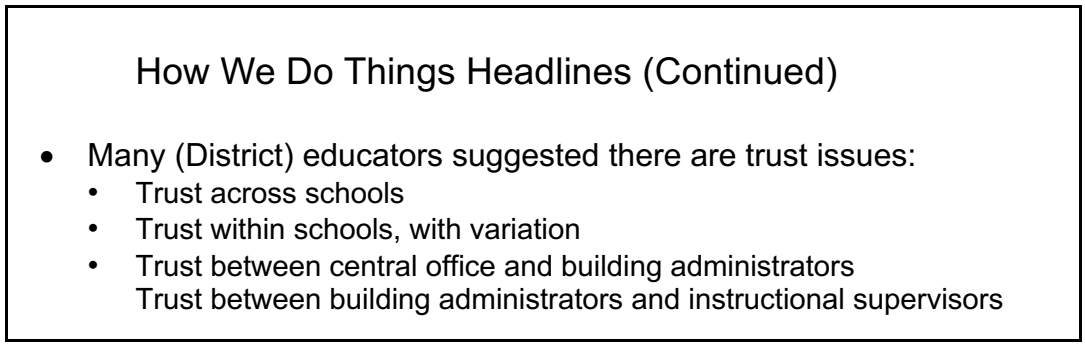
[District] professional learning opportunities appear vast. There are questions regarding the transfer of professional learning into classroom practice.

As you can see, as a district, there are strengths, a primary one being our staff. At the same time, there are areas that are affecting our ability to engage in greater district improvement in classroom instruction, learning, and student performance. The good news is that we have systems in place; that's not the case in every district. However, not all of our systems are operating optimally. Remember, to be a coherent district all seven systems have to be working in sync with one another—Instructional; Professional Learning; Talent Management; Student Support; Resource and Operations Management; Stakeholder Engagement and Communications; and Continuous Improvement. (See the Coherence Framework on page 3.)

While no formal report was provided to stakeholders, findings from the Center conducting the audit were shared through a PowerPoint presentation. The findings did note that many educators suggested there are trust issues (as noted in Figure 7).

Figure 7

Slide 16 from District-Initiated Coherence and Capacity Audit



As the school's distributed leadership model began to take hold during the three years before this study, the researcher sought insight from the study participants to answer the five research questions.

Question 1: What factors contribute to an educational institution's transition from a traditional leadership model to a distributed/shared leadership model that fosters high-quality instruction?

The shift in the school's operational organizational model from a traditional hierarchy to a distributed leadership model is an evolutionary process. Using the concepts in Jim Collins's book, *Good to Great* (2001), the newly constructed leadership team, now comprised of empowered teacher-leaders, needed to understand the district's leadership model and its impact on the school. Table 4 presents the distributions of responses

regarding the participants' understanding of the organizational models in the district and the school, and their roles in both.

Table 1

Participants' Perceptions of the Organizational Change to a Distributed Leadership Model (Number of Responses=7)

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 44. I recognize multiple layers of organization with a system as a whole.	57%	43%		
Q 45. I understand the power structure and how decisions are made in various contexts within a system.	43%	43%	14%	
Q 46. I understand and work within the rules of formal and informal established hierarchies to complete the task(s).	71%	29%		
Q 49. I facilitate collective or collaborative inquiry processes and practices within a system.	29%	43%	29%	
Q 51. I understand how finances and resources are allocated (i.e., projects, schools, system-wide) and can access resources when necessary.	14%	57%	29%	
Q 58. I mobilize the right people into action.		100%		
Q 60. I am keenly interested in the larger/bigger picture of how decisions impact a system.	29%	57%	14%	

When asked to reflect on their responses, the participants noted the importance of creating working conditions that foster a collaborative environment where all

stakeholders feel comfortable sharing and working together. One participant noted, "Collaboration works best in any situation that allows participants the time to develop a true sense of comradery around a shared goal." Another participant identified what was important in creating a collaborative environment, "Collaboration works best around instruction. If all of our energy is placed in the instructional framework, our students will be the benefactors. Collaboration does not work when the district or building administration provides specific directives." Also important to a respondent was the ability to model capacity building with colleagues, "I work with what I know and learn from others about the systems that are in place in my school community."

Creating a focused environment was evident among respondents. Using instruction as a focal point seemed to create a leverage point to welcome multiple viewpoints and create a shared purpose in collaboration. Also, several instructional leaders have identified the concept of systems thinking. For example:

> I have been growing into a 'systems' person. Instead of focusing on the individual 'discipline silo,' I am able to see the bigger picture. This, in turn, helps improve my instructional practice and allows me to prioritize the importance of topics based on when my students will need them in my own class and in others.

Another instructional leader commented,

> My role within the system is sometimes confusing to me. I've had ideas in the past, but have hit walls because of the system. I have gone to the wrong people and have asked the wrong questions. While I wish this was something I could have learned from, when you get hit with negative responses that you do not hear from the person who makes those decisions, it is hard to get answers as to why. I

> need to work on understanding that a system is complicated, and I'm not always going to get an explanation as to why my ideas won't work. I have to learn to live with a 'no' and no follow-up. My strength is that I will do whatever is told to me within the system to help the system as a whole.

Others acknowledge the learning curve inherent in navigating the change to systems-approach thinking:

> I still have work to do when working within a system. From my answers above, I tend to see the leaves instead of the trees. I also need to foster relationships with those people and/or ideas that may oppose change. Looking at these questions and my answers provide me with ideas to change how my DLT operates. I believe I am getting better with my questions to my department. Sometimes I need to sit back and listen rather than talking.

And another said,

> I have learned a lot over the past couple years about a system. I think understanding a system comes with experience. You have to have opportunities to meet the key members of the system and have opportunities to work with different people. To truly understand a system. Working with the different parts of it allows you to see the bigger picture.

Still, others reflected on their work with adult learners and the importance of modeling collaboration and creating an atmosphere conducive to moving the instructional work forward.

> I feel like I try to create an environment where all voices are heard and feel heard. I don't think top-down leadership works as well as a shared model. As a building

> leader, I do think I can work on longer-term planning with my team. It's easy to get stuck in the here and now and ignore planning for the future.

Another said,

> I will admit that I much prefer working with my students than with colleagues. It's why I got into teaching in the first place. The other thing I will admit is that I shy away from frank feedback when it's critical. No one likes to deliver bad or uncomfortable news, so I need to work on that.

And another participant noted,

> I am a collaborator at my core. I need to bounce ideas off of people because it allows me to reflect even when I do not get any guidance or official feedback. Just being able to say it to someone else allows me to be a better thinker. The only time I do not collaborate is when I do not trust someone, when I feel like they will use what I have to say against me or will take credit for my ideas.

Finally, one participant reflected on modeling their belief in continuous learning.

> If you are in education and do not believe in lifelong learning, I'm not sure that education is for you as a career. I believe that as teachers, we should always be striving to get better—for yourself and the kids. While I am all about lifelong learning, I sometimes bristle at the PD days that do not translate to improved skills or strategies in the classroom.

Furthermore, in growing as leaders in an organizational system, participants were asked to reflect on how they would determine the next steps after an initial proposal was rejected; the respondents noted the importance of bringing more colleagues to the conversation. As noted by one instructional leader, they would find "opportunities to

brainstorm as a whole group or work in small groups to share, collaborate, and discuss ideas." Similarly, another noted, "I would talk to stakeholders and get their feedback before I determined next steps." Furthermore, another said, "I would consult with my colleagues and rethink my proposal." While collaboration was an important step, so was reflecting on possible reasons for the rejection, "I think that you would reflect on the rationale for the rejection, reach out to others that may be able to offer more insight, and make the changes that are needed." Still, others stated:

> I would review the proposal with a trusted colleague or colleagues and see if the proposal is feasible with some changes. I just realized I would have a harsher reaction if the rejection came from someone whose opinion I did not value.

Another stated that "I would reflect on the reasons why it was rejected, look for input from other people/stakeholders, etc. and go 'back to the drawing board,' especially if it was something [that] I truly believed in."

The constitution of this teacher-leader group has evolved during the principal's tenure. Over the past three years, this group has worked together to transition to a distributed leadership model. In reflecting on what made the participants interested in becoming a department chair and some of the pros and cons they considered in deciding, one leader stated:

> Honestly, I initially was interested in becoming a department chair because I wanted some leadership experience. I do not want to be a teacher forever. Don't get me wrong, I love what I do, and I love working with students and seeing them learn and grow. However, I do think people age out of the classroom. When I no longer can relate to youth and feel like my patience and drive is decreasing, I do

> not want to impact students anymore. I have seen teachers stay too long in the classroom and become these teachers that negatively affect students. I do not want to be that teacher. When my position came up, I chose specifically to be the department chair because I did not want our department to lose its feel. We are a very close-knit group that worked well together, and I wanted to keep that alive. When I weighed the pros and cons, I knew it was going to be difficult to get the respect from my peers because I'm younger than them and not as senior, but I knew if they had to choose someone, they would have chosen me. Likewise, a pro to me taking this on is I know I was one of the most respected in the department. I knew I could lead the team of teachers I had at the time. I knew their strengths and weaknesses, and I knew who I could rely on and who I would have to pay more attention to. I knew everyone inside and out because I worked with them all on a classroom level.

Others, however, were more hesitant:

> I was not interested at first but was approached by my principal [at the time]. When I was asked to take on this position, I was interested because we had just experienced a year of being led by someone who had no interest in truly leading the department and moving us forward. I had ideas about how we could improve instruction, collaboration, course offerings, and the way in which we were organized [teaching assignments, ordering protocols, etc.]. For me, the pros would be that I would have a stronger voice in regard to all of this and that I would be provided with the means to effect change. I also hoped it would mean the same in regard to how our building functioned. At the time, we were quite the 'boys club,'

> and gender discrimination was still a bit of an issue. The cons that most concerned me was the increased workload and responsibility and the potential impact it would have on my relationships with the people in my department. I also didn't know if my colleagues would take me seriously.

Still, others indicated a desire to take on a leadership role as a way of professional growth. One said,

> I became interested in the department leader position after taking leadership courses and realizing that I was already working as a leader within my department. I felt that I had a great deal to offer and was already a source of support for the staff.

While another discussed,

> I like seeing how the sausage is made. I like having access to behind the scenes information, and I like working collaboratively with our leadership team. Before I decided to be considered for department chair, I weighed how much more work it would be and what my responsibilities would be. I also weighed whether I was ready to be in charge of people—many of whom had much more teaching experience than me.

When asked to consider from their perspective, what is the primary purpose of being a department chair and how do they feel this purpose fits into the school's organizational model, participants viewed their role as a bridge between the teaching ranks and the administration. As one respondent put it, "I think my purpose is to be the liaison between administration and my department teachers. I also see my role as being a cheerleader/champion for my department." Others expanded on this viewpoint:

> Our school has a very different job description than most schools. I refer to the department chairs as the 'captains' like on sports teams. The coach gives us information to tell the team, and the team looks to us as leaders on what to do, say, and model. We are the people who rally the team when we are winning and inspire when we feel down.

Furthermore, another commented that:

> My main purpose of being department chair is two-fold, to be a conduit between administration and my department, but more importantly, to be a driving force of instructional leadership and change. I think these fit perfectly into the school's organizational model as the driving force of change is now coming from below and not from above 'superintendent,' 'Board of Ed.'

In looking at the emergence of the distributed leadership model, participants reflected on how the principal clarified the roles and responsibilities of the instructional leadership (IL) and the department chair (DC) to them and other teachers at the school. One respondent noted, "[The principal] shared his vision and asked for input. He consistently refers to the department chairs during faculty meetings." Another said,

> I think my principal and I have a common understanding of my role. I think he would agree with my captain analogy. Other teachers, especially the new ones, make me feel a little worse about my leadership position and don't get it. They think I am able to do more than I am. Coming from districts where department chairs have more of an administration role rather than a teacher role like in our school seems to be a big pill for them to swallow. They do not understand why the administration doesn't involve me in more, and I try to explain that our

> administration likes to be more hands-on with teachers and have one-to-one conversation. They often are surprised when I don't know of something that happened in their classroom or with students, and I have to explain that I will not be told of every instance, so if they need my support, they have to ask me or inform me of situations. I do not have any idea of how they are evaluated either, so it's hard to know who your strong teachers are.

Another department leader recognized the changing nature of their leadership position:

> I think the purpose of the IL and DC have shifted over time as we have worked collectively and collaboratively with our principal. As he has grown professionally and provided us with opportunities to learn more about leadership as a team, our purpose and roles have shifted. I don't think there's a clear outline anywhere, but I think that's okay. In regard to other teachers at the school, our purpose has been clarified by the creation of our DLT meetings, PD meetings, his involving us in decision making that they visibly see (scheduling, PGAP, etc.) and via emails (he often tells staff to ask their department chairs for support).

Still, others identified the organizational shift towards a distributed leadership approach:

> Our principal outlined the objectives for changes in instructional leadership a few years ago when we read a book on leadership in the business world and how that model could apply to us in the educational world. [The principal] encouraged us to read it a few chapters at a time and discuss collaboratively how we could tweak it to fit our purposes.

And another responded that

> This was done at leadership meetings where we have consultants speak to us, book clubs, and work together on projects like SCIP's, etc. Other teachers were made aware of this through DLT times, where we talk transparently about school issues as well as messages where the principal has made it clear that many of the decisions that are made are done by the leadership team through collaborative discourse as opposed to things just being a top-down initiative.

The participants were also asked to comment on what ways they have moved forward in meeting their professional goals as a department chair. One respondent reflected the consensus view—leading and listening are intertwined in their role. They said they "feel that I have moved forward in my professional goals as a department leader in that I am becoming a better listener and example for the teachers on my team." Another reflected on leaving their comfort zone, "I have moved forward in meeting my professional goals by becoming more of a risk-taker. I try new strategies in the classroom more often, I check in with other teachers and reflect on successes and failures more frequently." Still, others reflected:

> This question is hard for me. I need to work on becoming someone who is better at reflecting on my process. I have also had some inconsistencies during my time as department chair. I would welcome some outside perspective on this topic.

And another said,

> I feel I have improved in regard to soliciting input and feedback from my colleagues, and in regard to involving them in our processes. In the past, I used to come to the department with my plan—and people would sometimes accept it and sometimes freak out. Those that would freak out were vehemently opposed to

> changing the status quo. They were conditioned, as was I, that it was the department chair's job to determine the path and our process. Now, with the exception of what we have to accomplish related to our standards, I feel that I've figured out how to get almost everyone to contribute to determining our paths and our processes. I also used to feel that I had to be the source of instructional strategies and improvements, and now I've learned to reach out to my colleagues to share what they've learned and tried.

Some respondents noted that the shift to an instructional focus brought a clarity of purpose to their leadership work:

> I no longer have to worry about the administrative tasks during our meetings. We can talk about instruction and how the students are learning. The majority of the department is engaged in these conversations, and the PSAT/SAT scores indicate the students are achieving. When students' progress in grade levels, the teachers comment on how much more prepared the students are.

Another respondent replied,

> I feel [that] through my leadership, my department has been able to collaborate deeper on vertical alignment and articulation in our subject matter. We've been able to embrace Google Classroom and move forward to new learning in technology, which has helped instruction and student learning.

A comment from one respondent, reflecting on the evolution of the school's organizational model:

> I must say that I value and appreciate what [the principal] has done to empower us as a team and not just make us figureheads. I do feel like we serve a purpose, and

> I do feel like [the principal] values our contributions. I do sense that it isn't always easy for him to take a backseat sometimes, but I get it—I'm a control freak, too. I think most teachers are.

The initial meeting agenda of the 2018–19 school year provided evidence of the transition towards a distributed leadership model and the emergence of the instructional leadership team's increasing efficacy and leadership in the meetings (Figure 8). This meeting was at the start of the school year when the team began to transition fully to a distributed leadership model.

Figure 8

Department Leadership Meeting Agenda—September 17–18, 2018

Department Leadership Meeting

1:10 P.M. Date: **September 17-18, 2018**

Leadership Team Norms

- **Students First**
- Identify Information - Dissemination vs. Confidential – **TRUST**
- Professional Discourse – **RESULTS**
- Shared Success – Shared Commitment – **ACCOUNTABILITY**
- Respect for Diversity of Disciplines
- Value Each Other and Each Other's Role – **CHALLENGE, ENGAGE, SUPPORT, RESPECT**

Agenda

I. Review Norms
II. Instructional Topics

Item	Notes
Book Club Calendar	Monday, Oct 15 & 22 (Chapters 1–2)
5/5/5	Thoughts (principal); How do we measure instructional growth? (team) Work on how to make a template: Maybe using the 4C's?

	"Engineer effective learning environments for students."
Collegial Visits	Feedback, Pushback, Protocols (team) Q's- Choice, can we see notes, heads up to visit, what happens after visit, can you say no? when? a concern when a class is small, can we have pre/post-conference? What if the observer interrupts class? Staff has real concerns. Are we using visits to help each other? Can Collegial visit be a request to observe how another discipline approaches a topic or a request to ask a peer how a lesson is going? Sub coverage and need time to debrief Protocol for sub coverage? Department leaders as conduits for visits Pre-conference questions? Can observing teachers interact with students?
College Board Data	Thoughts? C-day Conversation! (team) Look at college board data (principal) sent.
	Working with (consultant), this year, as (Superintendent) works with "Center for Change," What could consultant bring to us to make us a better team?

III. Instructional Round Table

WL: PPT meeting, Teachers MUST stay the whole time, It's the law

Tech: New guy-doing well, making chariot, cart for food service, corn hole tournament for B-Ball

SS: History dept rolling along

Support Center: All is going well, students getting to know the Center. Students (upperclassmen) helping in the Center.

Math: All is well

Science: New teacher doing well in dept. Notebooks are working really well. Exposing misconceptions in 9th-grade students

VI. Next Steps:

Protocols for collegial visits

How do we answer questions from colleagues?

Look at College Board data

V. Adjourn

The emergence of shared crafting of the agenda and the shared facilitation of items is evident in Figure 3—a change from the principal-led agendas of previous years,

where the principal was the sole commenter and leader in the meetings, and participants only shared when called upon for a specific item. Furthermore, this change indicates an organizational shift from a traditional top-down hierarchical structure to an emerging shared-leadership approach.

The teacher-leaders in this study underscored the importance of creating working conditions that foster collaboration in a safe and collegial environment. The transition to a distributed leadership model where all stakeholders' input is heard and valued is a paradigm shift from a traditional hierarchical approach where only a select few disseminate information as they (administrators) deem appropriate. Creating a focus to this new collaborative environment was essential to foster shared purpose in the work. The systems thinking articulated by the department chairs was notable in that they understood the importance of breaking down "silos" of departmental thinking and working to bring about systemic change at the school. The leaders believe this coherence in purpose and vision will bring a greater level of clarity to the work of the entire organization around an instructional focus.

Question 2: How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in this transition?

The shift from a traditional institutional model that existed for decades at the school, longer in the district, is not accomplished quickly or without challenges to those whose comfort zone is in the traditional structure. The teacher-leaders now have a dual role in the school's distributed leadership model. They are teachers but also leaders. Table 2 identifies responses from the department chairpersons on the inherent ambiguity of this

dual role. They have no formal evaluative authority (the traditional hierarchical model) and yet are asked to lead the work towards high-quality instruction.

Table 2

Participants' Perceptions of the Ambiguity Inherent in the Role of Department Chair at the School (Number of Responses)

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 2. I listen intentionally to all participants to fully understand what is communicated.(10)	50%	50%		
Q 9. I intentionally structure dialogue and discussions to further specific learning goals. (9)		67%	33%	
Q 16. I frame my work on the belief that adult learning is interwoven with student learning. (9)	78%	22%		
Q 18. I accept and act on constructive feedback in order to model an open mind and improve my practice. (9)	56%	44%		
Q 19. I demonstrate the courage to take risks in order to support the participants' learning. (9)	56%	44%		
Q 20. I am reliable and follow through on my commitments to participants and the work. (9)	89%	11%		
Q 25. I am willing to admit when I'm wrong or don't know. (9)	89%	11%		
Q 26. I communicate honestly and courageously. (9)	67%	22%	11%	
Q 27. It is my desire to work with adults. (9)	22%	67%	11%	
Q 47. I understand and value the importance of garnering stakeholder support. (7)	57%	43%		
Q 48. I understand and manage resistance as a legitimate element of working within a system. (7)	43%	29%	29%	

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 53. I set achievable goals, considering system constraints. (7)	29%	71%		
Q 55. I consider the capacity for sustainability when creating goals and implementing plans. (7)	14%	71%	14%	

When asked to reflect on the ambiguity inherent in this quasi-administrative leadership position, the participants noted their concerns about a lack in their colleagues' perception of them as being qualified to lead. One respondent noted, "One fear is that they will reject my ideas/feedback. One thing I could do is to frame the idea or feedback in an 'improve student learning' perspective." Others reflected this perception.

> My biggest fear with working with adult learners is to be perceived as unknowledgeable and controlling. We have had some leaders who do not know what they are doing and, therefore, do not have the respect of the group. Ultimately, I want to be respected above all else. We have also had leaders who micromanage and need to control everything. This one I struggle the most with but am working the most on as well. I try to be overprepared for meetings I am running to make sure I know the ins and outs of the task so I can handle questions. I also ask my own leaders questions I anticipate getting ahead of time so that I may have an answer for the group even though that sometimes makes me look unintelligent in the eyes of my superior. I struggle more with relinquishing the control. I tend to micromanage, and I've been working on trusting my colleagues and choosing those whose strengths I can rely on. When this happens, I fear their slip-ups will reflect on me, which makes it hard, but something I am working on.

Another department leader commented on how proud they were of the relationships they had built, however, with that comes a fear of letting the department down:

> I can't think of any fears/concerns regarding working with the adult learners in my department. I have worked for many years to create a collaborative environment in which we all feel safe to share our ideas and concerns. I love working with them. My biggest concern would be to disappoint them in some way, or if they thought I was incompetent. The only thing I find I can do to allay those concerns is to always work to improve my own practice, to maintain clear communication, and to always work for the good of our students, the school as a whole, and our department. If I know I am doing those things consistently, then I feel better about those concerns/insecurities.

Another respondent commented on their efficacy as an instructional leader:

> I don't think I'll ever feel like I'm an expert teacher, no matter how long I am in the profession. Because of that, I sometimes feel like I shouldn't be telling others how to approach their job. As for confronting that fear, I'm really not sure what to do about it. I guess it's just an insecurity of mine that I need to own up to and get over.

> I fear my colleagues do not see me as a strong educator. While I provide opportunities for them to work in grade-level groups, I often work alone. In order to move from this fear, I can invite myself to work with other grade levels, rather than staying by myself.

A comment from one respondent, reflecting on the inherent ambiguity of the department chair position in this school's distributed leadership model:

> The middle management role of Instructional Leader is often a tough place. We have no true control over what our teachers do in their classrooms. We can make suggestions, provide support, but in the end, the administrators are the ones the teachers defer to for many issues.

When asked to reflect on their work, both as a teacher and instructional leader, participants were asked if the patience they exhibit with their students is the same as with the adult learners they are leading. While noting the importance of collaboration and inclusivity among all stakeholders, some participants revealed the challenges of leading adult learners. One leader stated, "I probably have less patience with adult learners because I feel that as adults, they should be better at managing themselves than the children we work with." Another reflected, more frankly, "[I have] almost too much patience with adult learners," while yet another participant noted, "I am willing to take risks and lead by example. I think I need to be more assertive rather than sometimes taking on tasks myself." Still, others stated, "I have the same amount of patience (with adult learners as with student learners). In fact, many of my department members say that is a strength of mine they would not have in my position." While yet another noted that

> I fully admit that I do not have the same level of patience with adult learners as I have for my students because our students are not adults. That said, I have taught myself to develop more patience with them than I used to have. I have learned that we are all learners and that each of my colleagues learns about different things at a different pace, and their level of motivation can be affected for

> multiple reasons. I also appreciate that most of them/us may take a while to make a decision or work through an idea because they are all very passionate about what they do, and changing their practice can be difficult.

Similarly, participants were asked to reflect on their leadership challenges when working with adults in their departments. The participants continued to reflect on their role in this leadership model. One respondent stated, “I fear that I might say the wrong thing or not understand others thought processes. I am consistently assessing my responses to my adult peers.” While another respondent reflected on the risk associated with school-wide systems change and the role played in a distributed leadership model, “I usually confine my advocating within the system at the department level unless additional supports are necessary.” Others stated:

> I think I am a pretty good communicator. I try to always have open communication lines with my people. I would hope that everyone I manage feels that I am approachable and that they can always reach out to me. As I stated earlier, though, I do need to work on delivering bad or uncomfortable news.

And another,

> I need to be more outgoing and honest in my dealings with my department. I hold back at times because I feel that some department members don’t feel I’m adequate. I know what I am doing and need to lead with a sense of confidence without being cocky.

Others reflected on their leadership characteristics and the impact of these on leading:

> As a department leader, there is a fine line between expecting an adult learner to follow through with the agreed-upon work and demanding that they do the work.

> It is difficult to call individuals out during department meetings, and limited time to find time to work individually with them.

And another was concerned about being too formal,

> I feel I have zero sense of humor. I want to be funny and engaging, but that's not who I am. When I try to be funny in my written communication, I feel it falls flat. When I am straight forward, I am too uptight. I can ask a valued colleague what they would like in my communication and take their feedback and improve.

While another feared offending,

> Sometimes I fear having difficult conversations with adults when it could possibly offend them, even though it is not personal. I only see two possibilities of confronting this at this time: (1) just have these conversations and learn to be okay with being uncomfortable; (2) work on affirming others while having these discussions to minimize offending them.

Finally, one respondent reflected on the ambiguity of the role and how to navigate the larger organization as a DC:

> My position is difficult because I do not always have access to the people who I would want to hear my ideas. When you have people in between you and someone higher you think would relate to you more, it's difficult for the person in between to convey your message correctly or to convey your message at all. I'm not sure how I could advocate with that standing in my way.

Along those lines, when asked from their perspective regarding the primary purpose of being a department chair, and how do they feel this purpose fits into the school's organizational model, one participant noted:

> Provide communication between administration and department, promote shared professional goals, support, and instruct where needed. The model provides the department members with a venue to work collaboratively to share ideas, concerns, and work without concern of evaluation by administration.

Furthermore, when asked to reflect on what ways, if any, their relationship with other school and district administrators has changed since becoming department chair, one participant stated, “I guess I’m more visible now. I actually have relationships with downtown supervisors where I had almost none prior to me getting the role.” Still, another shared, “In the past two years, I have found it easier to speak to school administration regarding instructional issues. I don’t believe my relationship with district administrators has changed.” Another participant equated their role with creating a higher level of respect, “I now have a voice at the table and more respect to school/district administrators. I would hope that I have a greater sense of respect from them as well.” Finally, a participant noted the ability to work with district administrators from across grades and buildings:

> I have had the privilege of working with many other administrators in the district due to this position. It has allowed me to network and work with buildings all over the district. I have a much better understanding of not only the systemic running of our building but also the bigger-picture workings of the entire district.

When asked how the members defined and measured the success of their work as department chair, one participant replied, “If our shared goals have been achieved. If the staff is comfortable sharing and engaged during department meetings.” These themes of

trust, shared purpose, and collaboration were also evident in other responses to this question:

> If the people in my department respect each other, actively collaborate with each other, and become enthusiastic about our path, then I know we are being successful. If our students become better, more enthusiastic learners due to shifts in our practices due to our work, then I've been successful. If the teachers in my department are learning about and implementing new strategies, and excited about it, and thanking me for it, then I know I'm successful. It's all about teaching and learning!

Some looked for traditional metrics to assess success:

> As Department Chair, I define success as improvement in student learning goals and professional growth of teachers. In the past, we were able to use district-level assessments such as NWEA and PSAT and SAT scores to determine if students were progressing. I would like to be able to use the common assessments, but our department has had no district common assessments for several years.

Someone else commented,

> I think that the success of my work is both defined and measured by the culture and climate of the school. This is done through quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal measures. Students improving academically and feeling safe socially and emotionally are probably the biggest measures of success, in my opinion.

Others defined success based on the functionality of the collective team they lead:

> Are we working together as a department to collaborate and support each other? Are we achieving our instructional goals? Are we able to communicate effectively

> to improve our instruction? Are we moving forward? These are some litmus questions I ask to see how successful I am.

Finally, when asked to reflect on the department chair role, its inherent ambiguity in the organization, and their work on the leadership team, respondents commented:

> I just have to say: I love the way our principal has constructed our leadership team. Being a member of a department is so nice because it bonds you. I like having a separate team I feel comfortable being vulnerable around and honest with to make me a better teacher/leader/person.

And,

> I've been micro-managed under '[the old system by the principal],' and I've had responsibility released to me with '[distributed model by the principal].' The latter situation has helped me grow professionally, in addition to helping my department grow professionally. This is one way in which the 'trickle-down' philosophy actually works, at least with me and members of my department.

Others shared their reflections on contributing as part of a team:

> It has been a pleasure working with the Instructional Leadership Team. I believe that we all feel like we are strong contributors to the school community. It is a collaborative working team.

An another said,

> I am honored to be part of such a cohesive, honest, hardworking group of Instructional Leaders. We all have a common vision that is guided and supported by our administrators, which in turn helps make the school a wonderful learning environment for our kids.

It is evident that in the emerging distributed leadership model at this school, the identified challenges are not as significant as the satisfaction and reward of leading a team towards achieving a collective goal and a shared, focused vision of high-quality instruction (HQI).

The perceptions of the department chairs centered around their self-efficacy. Many expressed wondering about their ability to lead and gain the respect of their department members. Their role as a leader, with a formal organizational title and stipend, is contrasted with having no evaluative authority and a full teaching load. This dynamic causes frustration with many of the respondents, especially when they have to have difficult conversations with those they lead. The expectation that all department members will follow through with the same fidelity in their work can be discouraging. Many discussed their communication styles, including their strengths and weaknesses in this area. The added definition of this "middle management" position was also discussed. These leaders are not only working within a distributed leadership model in their building but also within a more traditional structure at the district level. Some noted this could be frustrating due to the different organizational structures in their district-level role, where they see themselves as having less autonomy and not seeing their district administrators as often as they would like. Because of this, department chairs expressed that they do not always sense the same level of confidence at the district level as they do in their building. Many noted that district administrators could not devote the same amount of time to establishing interpersonal relationships with them due to their work across multiple disciplines and grade levels. The result can be to diffuse the feeling of support and

connectedness between the school-based instructional leader and the district administrator.

Question 3: How does the culture of the educational institution influence the transition to the distributed/shared leadership model?

Educational shifts are a slow-changing process, especially when long-standing practices and traditions are embedded in the school's culture. In addition to navigating the ambiguity of their leadership role (as seen in Table 2), participants can be energized. At the same time, they can be hindered by the culture of the school. Each department's subculture contributes to the overall school culture. Table 3 presents the responses from the participants in how to move the work ahead through collaboration and stakeholder (teacher) buy-in, as well as when to stand on principles in their leadership. This balance is a critical component of leadership and is impacted by the culture and subculture in a school setting.

Table 3

Participants' Perceptions of the Influence of School Culture in Their Work Using a Distributed Leadership Model (Number of Responses)

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 3. I take an ethical stance and support others in operating from an ethical perspective. (10)	60%	40%		
Q 11. I foster adult learners' engagement in order to maximize opportunities to learn. (9)	11%	56%	33%	
Q 23. I know what to compromise and when in order to move the work forward. (9)	57%	33%	11%	
Q 28. My passion motivates others. (9)		89%	11%	
Q 34. I foster a sense of community. (8)	75%	13%	13%	

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 37. I exhibit a belief in life-long learning as a foundation for education.(8)	75%	25%		
Q 56. I identify and influence key decision-makers. (7)	14%	29%	57%	
Q 58. I mobilize the right people into action. (7)		100%		
Q 61. I am attuned to relationships and how they influence decisions. (7)	43%	29%	29%	
Q 62. I have the ability to 'read' people and situations. (7)	29%	57%	14%	
Q 63. I embrace the opportunity to work with those who hold dissenting views. (7)	14%	29%	57%	
Q 81. I identify and disrupt thinking that enables and perpetuates institutional bias. (8)	25%	50%	13%	13%
Q 82. I expect and encourage pushback. (8)	13%	88%		
Q 85. I am able to notice, respond to, and support the encouragement of participants who are feeling vulnerable or unsafe. (8)	50%	50%		

When asked to reflect on how the culture of the school influences the work or role of the department chair in the school's distributed leadership model, one participant noted, "Internally, I have less patience with my colleagues at times, but I do my best to not show it. I understand that my perception and/or enthusiasm for certain things is not shared by everyone." Another respondent noted the challenge of those less inclined to embrace change: "Collaboration works best when both/all members buy in. It's not helpful if one of the members isn't fully invested." Still, another respondent was more specific in identifying this challenge: "One fear is the 'no' people who will always find a

dark side to anything. I could address those people with reasons why they should look at it from a different perspective." While another respondent looked to evaluate their own leadership style to mitigate this disconnect: "It's sometimes difficult to facilitate members of my team to contribute in professional inquiry and reflection. I need to learn new skills to foster this." Other participants shared,

> I need to concentrate on the importance of student learning and remove the adult egos from the equation. Additionally, I need to push people past their comfort zone. There are some members of the department that are happy to be spoon fed the information or provide positive headshakes while their practice indicates they do not believe in our 'shared' vision.

Another commented,

> Each year teachers are afforded the luxury of new students. As a leader of adult learners, 75% of my department return year after year. The positive department influences bring their optimism. The negative influences remove air, life, and ideas from the room. I do not have patience with those adults, and sometimes that impatience shows.

Some members viewed the collaborative culture as a benefit to moving the instructional work forward. One commented that

> My disposition is my strength as a leader. I am a pretty relatable person and am told I can command a room with my disposition. People tend to trust me and know I won't judge them or discuss them with anyone. The part of me I need to work on is my ability to take the initiative. I can really rally the troops behind something but have a hard time deciding what we should rally around.

While another said,

> Collaboration works best when there is a specific objective to address. There are situations where collaboration is not helpful—a group that does not get along together, a group that stays 'in the land of nice,' members of the group are afraid to speak up because they may get in trouble, the feeling that the decision is already made so why bother?

And another responded,

> Having a frank discussion with colleagues who need to hear constructive but maybe uncomfortable feedback. The way to confront my fear would be just to do it. I avoid such discussions because I am a people-pleaser. I do realize, to be a better leader, that I need to give my people frank and honest feedback, even when it might be uncomfortable.

Whereas others saw the importance of navigating the members they are leading as a way to coalesce the adult learning community. For example,

> I am very good at reading people. I always have had that ability. However, when working with others, I'd say that I gravitate toward working with people who have a similar view to mine. I should probably embrace working with people with different views in order to push my thinking.

Another commented that

> This tells me that I am aware of the larger picture and usually can read people and/or a crowd, and respond and alter plans quickly. I think I need to strengthen my strategies of working with others with different views from me.

Finally, one respondent viewed communication and messaging as the bridge between divergent viewpoints and mindsets:

> I need to work on my messaging. It's clear that this is an area I need to improve. I want to be a person of few words, but the few words could provide some people with the wrong idea. Clarity is key.

Another respondent noted, "Dissenting views are welcome as long as they are discussed in partnership with the department. Growth and new ideas are often generated from the discussions and debates over a dissenting view."

Participants were also asked what made them interested in becoming a department chair and what were some pros and cons they weighed when deciding to take on this leadership role. One participant said,

> I was at a point in my career where I wanted to be more involved in not only educational decision making but able to shape and influence educational policy in my school. Some of the pros were—able to see other department perspectives, able to see other colleague's perspectives outside of my teaching bubble, able to have a real say in professional development, and how to make our teachers better instructors. One of the cons was how was I going to be perceived. Were people going to think I was a 'suck-up' or 'brown-noser,' and how were my colleagues in my department going to treat me?

Another responded,

> I was looking for a way to help make an impact on the entire school and all students. Some pros are that I get to work on an interdisciplinary team and look at the school as a larger system rather than individual departmental silos. Some cons

would be the need to have some difficult conversations with my colleagues from time to time, but that was to be expected and isn't bad; it just takes me out of my comfort zone.

Interestingly, the respondents noted the importance of collaboration and garnering buy-in from their department members. Some noted the frustration that comes with 'no' people in their department and the corresponding frustration that occurs when having to be patient with these teacher's attempts to derail the shared purpose. The leaders often reflected on what they feel they need to do to foster collaboration and professional inquiry in their departments. Fostering trust among the department is essential and most department chairs feel they are seen as advocates for their teachers. However, they do not all agree that the teachers understand their dual role as department advocates and part of a larger school-based decision-making team—many viewed communication and messaging as the bridge between divergent viewpoints and mindsets.

Question 4: How does a distributed leadership model impact collective teacher efficacy?

This research question lends itself to opportunities for collaboration and professional growth, both collectively and individually. The role of teacher-leaders is a crucial component in fostering a sense of collective efficacy. Table 4 presents participants' views on the leadership moves by the department chairs to foster a sense of belonging, collaboration, and collegiality in a safe and supportive environment. The balance of encouraging diversity of opinions and thoughts, even when the message is not in line with the shared purpose of the organizational focus, is reflected in the responses.

Table 4

Participant's Perceptions of the Impact of the School's Distributed Leadership Model on Collective Teacher Efficacy (Number of Responses)

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 1. I foster group membership for all participants so that all perspectives are valued. (10)	70%	30%		
Q 4. I take a caring stance to ensure that all participants feel valued. (10)	70%	30%		
Q 5. I create a safe environment so that each participant feels safe to risk, learn, and share. (10)	90%	10%		
Q 14. I foster mutual responsibility for all group members' learning. (9)	44%	44%	11%	
Q 17. I take the time to notice and appreciate the work of adult learning and convey this to participants. (9)	33%	56%	11%	
Q 24. I read the group using verbal and nonverbal cues to successfully adjust facilitation. (9)	57%	44%		
Q 31. I honor and welcome all perspectives. (8)	75%	25%		
Q 33. I value the professional expertise and experience of group members. (9)	78%	22%		
Q 39. I am committed to supporting the growth of colleagues. (8)	75%	25%		
Q 40. I enjoy the complexity of problem-solving instructional opportunity gaps, welcoming, and honoring the contributions of others (parents, students, colleagues). (8)	63%	38%		
Q 63. I embrace the opportunity to work with those who hold dissenting views. (7)	14%	29%	57%	

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 78. I am willing to suspend my own agenda and judgment, listen deeply to understand and hear what is being said. (8)	38%	63%		
Q 79. I seek to understand perspectives that differ from mine. (8)	25%	63%		13%
Q 83. I encourage risk-taking, reflection, and growth in others. (8)	63%	25%	13%	
Q 84. I am able to mediate conversations around sensitive topics without shutting people down. (8)	25%	63%	13%	

When asked to reflect on the influence that their work as instructional leaders in the school's distributed leadership model has had on building collective teacher efficacy, the participants shared the opportunities for collaboration and the challenges of leading such an effort. Specifically, one participant shared, "One fear is that they will reject my ideas/feedback. One thing I could do is to frame the idea or feedback in an 'improve student learning' perspective." Another sought to widen the circle of contributors: "I listen and tap into the younger/newer teachers to see what they can offer." This shift in mindset from a traditional hierarchical (veteran teachers only) school model is notable. Further evidence of this thinking came from another instructional leader's response:

> I feel like I try to create an environment where all voices are heard and feel heard. I don't think top-down leadership works as well as a shared model. As a building leader, I do think I can work on longer-term planning with my team. It's easy to get stuck in the here and now and ignore planning for the future.

Some participants addressed how they managed to navigate the challenges of a diverse group of adult learners (all levels of seniority and experiences). One respondent accomplished this through constant learning: “I am constantly reading, searching the internet, and attending conferences to improve my teaching. I will share this information with anyone who asks. Perhaps I should offer my ideas to others more.” While another participant stated,

> My strength is in my belief that lifelong learning is so important in both one’s personal and professional life. I believe that having a greater understanding of how to find and consistently utilize a reflective problem-solving model will assist me in developing my instructional practices, as well as members of my department.

Still, others noted,

> I try really hard to make an environment where people feel safe to speak and contribute to discussions. I feel that it is important to have different types of voices in my department. I could work on explaining to other members of my department how that is important to me. Not all my adult learners value everyone’s voice as much as I do.

Another noted,

> I firmly believe that the adult learners I work with consistently feel safe enough to take risks and share their ideas and that they know I value all of them and care for their well-being and development as an educator. I do realize that I do not always value their perspectives, and that is something that I have continually worked to improve upon. And, while I usually listen very intentionally to what they say,

> there are times when that is difficult due to the nature of the conversation. When the adult learners I interact with veer off topic or take too long to get to their point, I still struggle to listen intentionally (although I feel I have improved).

One participant reflected on the need to become more adroit at providing critical feedback to build collective efficacy and instructional capacity further:

> I think a strength of my communication is listening. I will listen to everyone's ideas. My downfall is communicating with those [whose] ideas I do not agree with. I could be more open and ask follow-up questions when I initially do not agree with something someone says.

Still, another looked to balance the diversity of experience in their department:

> I need to attend to the needs of those in my department more. I need to ask what their strengths and weaknesses are and where they want to improve and how I can help them. While I value reading to gather knowledge, I have a younger cohort of department members and can investigate new ways to obtain knowledge.

Furthermore, participants were asked to describe, from their perspective, the primary purpose of being a department chair, how they feel this purpose fits into the school's organizational model, how it impacts the overall school community. Some participants referred to the role of Instructional Leader as leading a shared purpose centered around high-quality instruction: "We create professional opportunities for teachers to share their ideas on high-quality instruction with the school community via professional development or in-school visits." In a similar response, a participant noted the important work of the leadership role:

> We are the team that the rest of the school looks to for guidance. I think we all lead by example, and most teachers follow that example. I think that most teachers look at it as if their instructional leaders are doing it. It is safe for them, as well.

Other participants noted, "The main purpose is to learn from the team to be able to lead my department through collegiate discussions. This fits into the school's organizational model as we provide learning opportunities for our colleagues." While another said, "With the exemption of one or two members of our instructional leadership team, I think many teachers look to us for inspiration in the classroom and people they can go to and discuss instructional practices."

Still, others viewed their collective work as an ongoing process. One commented, "I want our team to continue to drive teacher efficacy and improvement by modeling best practices and pushing ourselves to get better all the time, whether that is through collaboration with our colleagues or self-reflection." And others commented,

> We continue to build on the instructional work from the prior year. We have continuity line [in instructional focus; coherence], and the teachers in our building can see this through the line. Adult learners are much like child learners; as long as we tell our teachers why we are doing something, they will do it, so the children are the beneficiaries.

Finally, the importance of a shared purpose as a leadership team is reflected in this respondent's comment:

> IF [capital IF] each department chair is taking what we learn and decide to their respective departments, and encouraging people to take risks and share their

> results in an environment of trust and constructive feedback, then instruction should improve in all areas over time. I think we are moving in the right direction, and have seen growth in my department in this regard, especially in the last few years.

Building a sense of collective teacher efficacy is seen as an opportunity to widen the circle of participants in the growth of teaching capacity, especially when bringing younger teachers to the table. Having a diverse group of teachers in a department can create a challenge and spur the leaders to create a dynamic environment where people first feel safe to share their ideas and then to take risks without fear of ridicule or reprisal. Respondents often cited the importance of listening to all members, and most acknowledged that they still have work to do in this area and have the patience needed to lead the work with adult learners daily. That said, the primary driver in fostering a sense of collective efficacy is creating a shared purpose for the work. Many noted that creating professional opportunities to build collective efficacy is a significant component of their leadership role.

Question 5: How does a distributed leadership model impact a school in building and strengthening instructional capacity?

The concepts of building collective teacher efficacy and strengthening instructional capacity in a school setting are interrelated. While not mutually inclusive, a stronger, more collaborative workforce that embraces a shared purpose can impact a stronger instructional model (HQI) at the school. Table 5 reflects the responses provided by the department chairs as to the role they play in strengthening the instructional

capacity of the school. The questions asked the participants to reflect on their role as a teacher and as a teacher-leader.

Table 5

Participants' Perceptions of the Impact of the School's Distributed Leadership Model on Building and Strengthening the Instructional Capacity of the School (Number of Responses)

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 1. I foster group membership for all participants so that all perspectives are valued. (10)	70%	30%		
Q 8. I use reflection strategically as a tool to inform my practice and improve adult learning. (9)		67%	33%	
Q 10. I create environments and activities that encourage adult learners to question their assumptions. (9)		56%	44%	
Q 12. I encourage collegial inquiry so that participants can transform their practice. (9)	11%	57%	33%	
Q 13. I consider the spectrum of content knowledge and understanding of pedagogy as I plan professional learning opportunities. (9)	33%	57%	11%	
Q 32. I presume positive intentions that all group members are working in the best interest of student learning. (9)	44%	56%		
Q 38. I demonstrate reflective practice, believing in the improvement of teaching and learning begins with the teacher.(8)	75%	13%	13%	
Q 49. I facilitate collective or collaborative inquiry process and practices within a system. (7)	29%	43%	29%	

	Consistently	Usually	Occasionally	Rarely
Q 50. I pose the right questions at the right time to the right people.(7)	14%	43%	29%	14%
Q 54. I create and implement plans to meet goals. (7)	86%	14%		

When asked to reflect upon the influence of their work as instructional leaders in the distributed leadership model related to building and strengthening the school's instructional capacity, the participants expressed their willingness to further the school's instructional growth. However, some seemed unsure of how to move from within their department to a school-wide leadership perspective.

Some respondents took a holistic view, "I contribute a latitudinal perspective that spans over multiple disciplines. This helps to allow us to focus on the 'whole student' and make decisions that are good for kids." Still, others were focused on their work in building their department's instructional capacity. As noted by some participants, "I am good at promoting a sense of community by keeping student and teacher learning as my focus." Another stated, "I consistently strive to improve our teaching practice through periodicals/articles and research." Furthermore, the enthusiasm of one participant in declaring, "I am all in! (Fully committed to deepening instructional practices)." One leader noted, "My strength is in my consistent message that it is always about how everything we do is for the benefit of student learning." At the same time, another looked to model risk-taking and share it with multiple stakeholders, "I am always taking risks, trying new techniques, and sharing my findings with my colleagues whether my risks were successful or not." Others responded,

> I facilitate professional learning best when it is directly connected to goals that we as a department want to achieve and collaborate to determine—this enables me to plan more engaging opportunities that I can structure in a way that best meets the needs of my department and provides my colleagues with opportunities to challenge their thinking. I feel that I have had less control over the amount of time we have on our own to accomplish these goals and for me to plan activities such as these.

And,

> The adult learners know that I do not ask them to work harder than I do and that I will support them in any way that I can. I am patient, share my knowledge, and provide instruction and support as a regular practice. I need to develop a more effective way for the adult learners to use reflective problem-solving strategies so that we are working collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of the best practices to prevent a problem before it occurs or a recurrence.

One participant stated their need to be more involved in all grade-level learning as part of their leadership role:

> I need to insert myself into collaboration more. I want to hear what wonderful teaching happens in my department. I just need to appear in the grade-level meetings. I usually have new and unique ideas or can offer some suggestions. Most people are willing to hear new ideas. I love hearing ideas and hope my department members know that from my actions.

Finally, one respondent noted that the focus of the school's vision had shifted the work of the leadership team into a more coherent application toward high-quality instruction:

> In the past several years, all of our conversation in our Instructional Leadership Meetings has focused on instruction. The shift to instruction is much more comfortable as it is a common bond the entire department share. Knowing all of the work we do surrounding instruction will provide our students with more life opportunities easily directs our DLT and PLC conversations. My role is to facilitate the direction of those conversations and to continue to focus on instruction. It has become easy to remove pieces of the conversation if they do not deal with instruction.

This respondent also noted the challenge associated with leading the work as a department chair:

> The middle management role of instructional leader is often a tough place. We have no true control over what our teachers do in their classrooms. We can make suggestions, provide support, but in the end, the administrators are the ones the teachers defer to for many issues.

Respondents, when reflecting on the primary purpose of their leadership role, noted that it was the building of instructional capacity through collaboration and this collective focus (coherence) was a primary driver of their success thus far:

> I feel the main purpose is to work with my colleagues to move our department toward continual improvement in all areas (teaching, learning, collaboration, collegiality, respect, etc.). Our current organizational model enables me to

> accomplish this because it gives me the freedom to work with my colleagues to determine our best path, rather than making decisions for us. Our instructional leadership group has learned, together, about effective leadership, and I am able to discuss my department's successes and hurdles in order to improve my ability to guide our work. Knowing that we will not be micro-managed and that my principal has confidence in my abilities to lead my group has taught me to do the same with my colleagues. I am empowered to collaborate with them to determine our path and to evaluate districtwide initiatives, and to find ways these can be implemented to suit our and our students' needs within our discipline.

Another department chair described the main purpose of their role as,

> I believe that the main purpose of being a department chair is to help push instruction forward in the school. I view our role as 'middle-management' where we are there to help make decisions that impact the entire school as well as be there to support our departments.

Furthermore, when asked in what ways the Instructional Leadership Team has impacted instructional practices in the classroom, one respondent noted the outcome of the work: "By committing to and exemplifying collegiate planning and classroom visits between teachers." Another participant noted the confluence between the distributed leadership model and the school climate. They noted, "I don't know if it has been the work of the Leadership Team or just our building environment, but I feel like teachers feel very comfortable asking colleagues for either help or their opinion in handling something." Though unsure of the overarching reason, the emphasis on collaboration towards a shared purpose was recognized. Another participant stated,

> We have created professional development around high-quality instruction and what it looks like in the classroom with specific examples for teachers to use in their own instructional practices. We have supported peer visits where teachers who may have a problem of practice can seek a peer to help in finding a solution.

Also, participants noted the emphasis on an instructional focus to move the collaborative work forward through shared accountability to benefit students:

> Our instructional leadership team has been a way I am able to see what is happening in other departments. I am able to go back to my department and my own classroom and try other ways to reach students. Sometimes this happens in between topics on the agenda, which I think is also part of my principal's intent behind making this group.

Another participant commented,

> I've tried to bring the collaborative nature of the ILT to my department during DLT, and use it to continue to focus on sharing instructional strategies that work with our students in our particular discipline. Additionally, our ILT discussions about HQI have helped me more thoroughly understand its philosophy, which then helped me explain/clarify its ideas with my colleagues. Finally, I think that the ILT meetings have helped improve my own capacity and willingness to take risks, which I have brought to my own group.

Still, another expressed their views as

> Our DLT and PLC time is now focused solely on instruction. There are times when administrative items must be taken care of, but 75–80% of our time is

> devoted to working on the instructional framework. This focus takes away from potential distractions.

Finally, one respondent noted that the leadership position has expanded their organizational lens in pursuit of growing instructional capacity:

> I have a much bigger sense on where my instruction will need to go in the future. Because I have the 'big picture' behind the scenes, it enables me to make changes to my instruction because I know what the students will need to prioritize in other academic areas, not just my classroom. I also feel like I can ask for insight from other teachers outside of my own department for ideas on how to improve instruction.

Many respondents stated that the main focus of their work is furthering the instructional focus of the school and, in doing so, moving their department towards high-quality instruction. While most viewed collaboration as the means to achieve this goal, others noted that they need to continue to strive to improve their instructional practices, and, in modeling, they will lead the work towards this shared purpose. Others offered similar viewpoints to this strategy, noting that their department knows they will not be asked to work any harder than their leader. All participants indicated that having a focus on instruction was the greatest leverage to strengthening capacity among staff and at the school. A shared focus brings a level of coherence to the work by empowering leaders to further professional collaboration, discourse, and collegial classroom visits, all in support of a high-quality instructional model.

Role Theory: Creating a Shared Purpose

Within the 104-question survey, participants were asked to reflect on when they first took on the DC role. Specifically, to focus on what they hoped to accomplish, what specific goals did they have for themselves and their departments, and what goals did they have for their school community of teaching professionals.

An emergent theme found in the participants' responses to the survey questions was that of Shared Purpose. During the coding processes, data indicated the importance of creating a shared purpose by fostering in their work, with their departments, as well as in their work as leaders, creating and finding: voice, buy-in, engagement, alignment—school building and district—relevance, messaging, and collaboration. One hundred percent of the participants noted some or all of these keywords or ideas in their responses.

Respondents indicated a sense of purpose and focused on that collective efficacy. As one instructional leader commented, "When I became a department chair, my main goal was to make sure we did not lose speed as a department. We are always a department to rely on, and I wanted to keep it that way." Still, another noted that "I hoped to accomplish a collaborative environment. The goal was to get the department to work together and share responsibilities." Others reflected that

> My goal has always been to grow our enrollment in our courses and to have a diverse group of students taking our classes. For myself, I wanted to be an approachable leader who was seen as a good listener and someone who would voice my department's concern to administration.

Another reflected that

> My ideas of management and managing people have changed markedly in my tenure at [the school]. Originally, I was hoping to have a smooth transition from our former department head to me. The smooth transition did not happen. I wanted to continue the status quo so that I could learn how to be an educational leader. My specific goal was to move the department to the new ideas of educational leaders like Penny Kittle and Doug Gallagher—choice in reading and writing. In order to reach the goal for my department, I had to have the same personal goal. My personal goal has been met the past three years—the students understand I want them to be lifelong readers, writers, and thinkers. I need to make this goal more apparent to the department and then create a plan in conjunction with those people who believe this is the path we should take. I will need to engage those whose beliefs differ from mine, so we have a cohesive vision for our department.

Others reflected on the evolution of their role as a leader:

> When I first took on the DC role, I initially was hoping to bring more unity to my department that seemed to be fractured with very different personalities, so much so that nothing ever got done during our department meetings. I wanted to make them more meaningful, collaborative, and productive. I also wanted to align our teaching objectives with other departments, so we did not feel so disengaged from the school community.

Another department chair reflected that

> I hoped to be a resource for everyone in the building and extend my knowledge and strategies beyond just my department. I wanted to become a more effective communicator and learn how to handle professional 'conflict' better. All of this has taken me out of my comfort zone and has allowed me to grow both personally and professionally.

And still, another responded,

> I hoped to move the needle forward for my academic area of study; accomplish a sense of importance and respect for my department as we had not been represented in this way before; a sense of leadership in our school community as we are the leaders on relationship-building in the 21st century.

Finally, a veteran department chair noted,

> I've been a department chair for a very long time. At first, I wanted us to begin to collaborate more often and to identify ways in which we could improve our craft. I wanted to distribute courses (and their levels) more equitably among our group so that newer teachers had a better opportunity to work on instruction rather than classroom management because the tradition was to dump all the lower-level classes on beginning teachers. I wanted processes to run more smoothly and to provide us with more time to accomplish building or district tasks. I wanted our test scores in statewide assessments to improve and for teachers to accept responsibility as a department for the education of every student in our discipline—not just for their course. When I first began, I honestly didn't think beyond the department level.

Participants were also asked what, to date, has been the most successful part of the Instructional Leadership Team, and what have been the most significant challenges? Relating to creating a shared purpose in the work, a participant stated,

> One of the most successful parts of the Instructional Leadership Team has been organizing professional development for our teachers. We have made it relevant and worthwhile. One of the biggest challenges is getting everyone on board with the professional development and why it is important.

Other reflections included,

> The biggest challenge I have as a department chair has been the turnover in teachers. Since I have become department chair, we lost a lot of my major players. Those same ones I knew the strengths and weaknesses of and the ones I came to rely on. I have a small role in replacing the strong people I lost, and it's hard to get the right people on my bus when I'm not the one putting them there. I think this is where knowing what administration sees in the classroom would help because then I could help specific members of my department.

Another reflected,

> While we each have our own departments in mind, we work collectively and collaboratively in regard to the school-wide initiatives we create to send the same message. The biggest challenge is that I feel there are still members of the group who don't completely buy in and that I don't trust.

And another echoed that view,

> We talk about instruction and how to move the teachers in the school forward with their own instruction. Collaboration is no longer a taboo word, and the

> majority of the teachers are willing to open their doors and have other teachers visit their classrooms. Discussions surrounding instruction occur more regularly. The biggest challenge remains being in middle management and trying to have difficult conversations with teachers about their instruction. We are not at a point where instructional leaders can offer feedback on other teachers' instruction. The relationships continue to be built.

Finally, one participant responded regarding the team as a whole:

> I feel the growth of the Instructional Leadership Team itself is the most successful part. We are a respected and productive team that is responsive to student and teacher needs and is continuously working to improve the school for everyone. I think the biggest challenge is just getting as many people on board as possible when big changes occur.

Figure 9 provides evidence of the Instructional Leadership Team (Department Chairs) collaborating on the instructional initiative to build collective teacher efficacy and instructional capacity through collegial classroom visits before rolling out this school-wide focus on high-quality instruction.

Figure 9

Minutes from a Leadership Meeting indicating the Building of Instructional Capacity through Modeling Collegial Classroom Visits

February 2019: Item: Collegial Visits—Timeline; Fishbowl, Next Steps to Make it Happen
Minutes: Fishbowl: (Two instructional leaders modeling collegial visits to determine protocol)
Fishbowl of debrief to entire IL/DC team:
Colleague 1—sharing observation with Colleague A of his class:

- Data on observational practices
- Colleague A asked: Was there any time when I was asking them...they were unsure?
- Conversation veered—based on Trust of relationship—
- Next Steps?
  - Do we need a feedback protocol?
  - Pre/Post protocol
  - Quick discussion—okay b/c it was targeted (focused)
  - Form Needed to guide
  - Frame visit to students (helping me)

Colleague A—sharing observation with Colleague 1 on her class:

- Data on observational practices (detailed)
- One thing I was curious about (soccer site) —> was there an agreement not to respond until done?
- Will this help improve instructional practices???
- Clarifying Questions as part of protocol?

Protocols needed (one optional form for whole process):

- **Honor each other's time**
- **Know what you want prior to pre-visit**

Pre-visit (about 10 mins):

- what do you want me to look for?
- why is that important to you?
- when do you want me to come in?
- how long do you want me to stay?
- do you want me to talk to you students or not?
- do you mind if I bring a Chromebook?

Visit:

- length of visit pre-determined at pre-visit
- only interact w/students if given permission

Post-visit (about 10 mins):

- summarize evidence (more data-specific than anecdotal)
- allow time for questions, suggestions, sharing of ideas, etc., if desired
- discuss potential follow-up visit

Collective Efficacy Theory: Shared Accountability

When asked why it is essential to have leadership roles for teachers, the participants noted the importance of teachers' voice in creating a sense of accountability for the work. This theme came to the surface in the coding of the responses as shared accountability. The ideas of shared purpose and shared accountability were often co-mingled in the respondent's answers, which is important to note as that provides some coherence to the work—understanding the scope and vision of the work and collectively working towards greater instructional efficacy.

However, the respondents often noted the challenge in leading all participants towards greater accountability and the additional challenge of having all members they lead buying into a sense of urgency around the shared purpose of the work. During the coding processes, responses indicated the importance and the challenge of creating shared accountability. This theme was both within a department and among the school community as a whole. Common themes found in the survey responses are: having teachers' voice, providing honest feedback, empowering teachers, establishing a mutual working relationship—teachers and administrators—for the good of students, fostering an understanding of how the district is aligned with the school, creating a larger picture beyond the individual classrooms. All of the participants noted some or all of these key phrases or ideas in their responses.

As one participant noted, "We are the key voice of the front line. It's important to have teachers that you respect, giving you honest feedback that you can trust." Another responded, "I think it empowers teachers and makes them feel like they have skin in the game. If teachers aren't able to move into influential roles, they can feel like cogs in a

giant wheel." Supporting the concept of trust, shared purpose, and accountability, one respondent put it,

> It is important to have leadership roles for teachers to help build accountability for teachers as well as empower teachers to work towards a common mission. I think it can also help to build [morale] and give teachers a sense of community, camaraderie, and belonging.

While another participant noted the importance of shared purpose among teachers and administrators, "So that we can plan for and learn from each other and communicate about best practices with our peers, also, so that teachers and administrators can have a mutual working relationship for the good of our students." Other responses included:

> Leadership roles provide an opportunity for teachers to grow professionally, beyond the confines of their classroom and their specific course/content area. It also expands their view from something that can be quite myopic. I think it's important for teachers to understand how our district is organized, and the rationale principals and supervisors have for their expectations. I also think that these leadership roles help instill greater confidence in these teachers, which often manifests in the classroom as well. Additionally, people want to be appreciated and noticed for their skills and efforts. It makes them feel valued.

And another respondent said,

> When teachers are provided leadership roles, they see more of how the school works as a whole. Many teachers think and believe if something is good for their classroom, it should be good for the whole school. What is missing from the discussion is how the one room impacts the entire school community. Teachers

> who see the entire school, rather than just their room, will be able to assist the whole of the school and impact more students and other teachers.

Participants were asked to describe the type of feedback they have received about their work as Department Chair and from whom they receive feedback; also, how regularly they receive feedback and how helpful is the feedback they receive. Finally, they were asked how the feedback they receive could be more helpful. The participants stated that they would prefer more regular and specific feedback on their roles as department chairs/instructional leaders. One participant stated,

> [The principal] gives group feedback and often thanks us for our leadership, but I feel like the feedback is general in nature. Rarely does [the principal] or the VPs give feedback on me as an individual DC. It would be more helpful if the feedback was more individualized.

Still, another said,

> I have received positive feedback from my principal and supervisor throughout the school year, but it is mostly 'good job' and the like. I would like more honest feedback about what I can do differently, more effectively as a leader.

Honest feedback was a common thread and an essential aspect for continuing development of the distributed leadership model:

> I do wish I received more feedback about my work as a department chair. I want to constantly be working to get better. No one is perfect, and I want to know in what areas I can improve. I welcome harsh criticism. I think my administration likes me and, therefore, they tend to be nice, but I would love to know their honest opinions of me. I want to grow and get better. To me, the only way to do

> that is to know exactly where they see weaknesses in me not where I reflect my own weaknesses. I want to know where they see weaknesses. I want to improve in those areas. I would welcome the specific honest feedback.

Other participants also sought more specific and more frequent feedback on their leadership practices:

> [The principal] provides feedback, as do our assistant principals. It's not a regular occurrence. Much of it is not specific, however, which would be nice. I would like to know what my strengths are, and what my areas of improvement are, and perhaps how I could work to improve in these areas. We're all usually given the same feedback in our evaluation, and I understand why that is—but it would be nice to have a conversation specifically designed to focus on my skills.

And another participant commented,

> I receive feedback from my principal and my vice principal officially 2–3 times a year, but unofficially much more than that. Feedback is usually given in question form. 'What is going well for you?' 'What are you struggling with?' 'How are you going to approach that?' 'Are there any drawbacks to that?' 'What can I do to help you?' As frustrating as these questions can get, it forces me to look at myself as a leader and ask myself how can I resolve this issue or how can I be better?

Change Theory: Value on Trust

Finally, a third theme, potentially most important, emerged from the responses—trust. The respondents spent a considerable amount of time discussing this theme. The sub coding of the responses found two areas around trust: relational trust and advocacy.

Relational Trust – Perceptions of many participants indicated that their relationships within their department changed due to the nature of their leadership role. These responses included the feeling that department members shared less with them or, conversely, tried to extract information because the department chairs were "in the know" about certain items. Many found that the most challenging part of their role was having the "difficult conversations" around instruction. They noted the impact on their relationships with their colleagues who were considered friends if critical feedback had to occur.

Advocacy – The coding process also identified the respondents' belief that their department members trust their leadership as advocates for their departmental concerns and needs. The participants' perceptions of advocacy as a builder of professional trust in their department were identified by having a voice at the table, advocating, collaborating through collegial classroom visits and discussions around instructional practices, new teachers being encouraged to share and participate in discussions around instruction and technology. All participants noted some or all of these keywords or ideas in some of their responses.

Furthermore, while the participants felt comfortable in going to their administrative team and noted the accessibility of the administrators, they were also seeking a deeper, more meaningful level of feedback in their leadership work. The relational trust was strong, but the professional discourse was lacking on a deeper level, although the participants welcomed it.

Participants were asked to reflect on what ways, if any, their relationship with other teachers (veteran and new) has changed since becoming Department Chair.

Responses varied. For example, one participant said, “My relationships haven’t changed too much. I can tell people don’t tell me as much because they think I am going to tell my principal or assistant principal, but other than that, not too much.” On the other hand, another noted that “Sometimes teachers look to me to see if I know about anything coming down the pike. They know I have access to information in my role and sometimes look to exploit that. I keep quiet, of course.” For some, the position has offered a more comprehensive lens from which to see the work of the school: “I feel more qualified to help newer teachers while also being a frequently utilized resource for many of our veteran teachers.” Another respondent said,

> Personally, I find I am not as close to the teachers in my department as I’d like to be. It’s the one thing I don’t like about being a department chair. I find it stressful to have difficult conversations with some of them because I am afraid of how it will impact our friendship. I get it done anyway because I have to, and if I don’t, it could impact our students and our department, but I am always concerned about how it will affect our relationship.

Finally, one participant noted that

> Veteran teachers and I have the same or similar relationships we had prior. I believe new teachers in our department defer to me for questions regarding instruction and classroom management. I enjoy the role as our new teachers will be our legacy.

When asked, in what ways do you feel supported in your work as department chair and from whom do you receive that support, one participant noted the feeling of support from the building level, “I feel like [the principal’s] door is always open if I need

something. I don't feel like my downtown supervisor is very invested in supporting my work because [the district supervisor] has attentions pulled in so many directions." While another felt support from all levels of the administration:

> I feel supported 100% by my administrators and other department chairs. My supervisor is often supportive as well. If I need to run something by someone else first, or if I need to vent, or if I'm disappointed in the way something has gone that I thought would be successful, they are there to listen and discuss things with me.

Still, other participants noted that

> I receive the most support from my direct administration. I couldn't pick a better team to work under. I respect the three of them so much and feel comfortable discussing any hurdle I have with other administration with them. I also like the relationships I have with each of them because each one is different. I know which one to go to with different problems I have. While I report to one, it's nice to know I can reach out to any of them for support when I need it.

And,

> I feel supported from my principal and from my vice-principals who are very open to new pedagogical ideas for the classroom, support educational field trips, support creation of new clubs in the school. Recently with our new superintendent, I feel supported because [the superintendent] did not seem to bring any agenda with her when [the superintendent] took over and did not want to force new initiatives on us.

Or as another respondent put it,

> I feel that I have the support of my department to make decisions. The other department leaders are always there to help, as well. I also feel that I can go to any administrator in the building at any time to ask a question, ask for a resource, or just to get their perspective on something. I feel like I can be open and honest regarding any concerns I have.

Figure 10 provides evidence of the Instructional Leadership Team's efficacy as they reflect on and expand their strategy in building the instructional capacity of teachers using the HQI model.

Figure 10

Minutes from Leadership Team Meeting

Date: February 20, 2020 Topic: Debrief 2/19 Sessions—Next steps—Big Opportunities

Notes/Minutes:

Discussions went well. Would be better if the pencil drawing was updated.

Drawing needs

Words on there—everyone has different definitions—different lens: "Authentic task vs. performance task."

Definition of "economy

Some wanted "the definition."

Take away—not a "thing."

When it is introduced feel like it is something new

Question of "we are doing this" "How is this developing me into a better teacher?

Each aspect of the flow chart and spend a lot of time on each aspect

How do we bring it back to the whole of tying it together?

Use the March 4 building day to see the whole design as a learning tool to help improve individual instruction

Explanation of how HQI design came to be for [District]

((Superintendent) listening and working with teachers, admins.)

Summary

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. These findings are based primarily on an analysis of the survey responses and were supported by reviewed documents at both the district and building levels. Findings were discussed as they addressed the research questions and related to the model's theoretical framework used for this study and referenced in Chapter 2 (Figure 2).

The first research question examined the factors contributing to a school organization's transformative approach toward a distributed leadership model. The lack of coherence at both the district and school levels were identified from the school's accreditation findings, particularly regarding the standard of leadership. Furthermore, the district's coherence and capacity audit supported a pervasive lack of trust, shared purpose, and accountability in instructional practices and vision.

The remaining questions pertained to the building level, specifically, the transition to a distributed leadership model and its impact on the department chairs individually and collectively. Their perceptions of their role as 'middle management' without any evaluative authority, the impact of the school's culture in this organizational change, and the building of teacher efficacy to increase instructional capacity were examined.

The ambiguity found in the leadership role of the school's department chairs was often challenging to navigate in a culture accustomed to a traditional model. Specifically, while the teacher-leaders were looking to move instruction forward, they sometimes were hesitant because their department members expected that it is an administrator's role to strengthen the capacity of classroom teachers. Many respondents noted that their relationships with their department members, though different given their leadership role,

is strong because of the collegiality and collaboration modeled and demonstrated by an instructional leader. Additionally, the department chairs looked for specific and honest feedback on their roles from the administration, not just occasional praising or general mentioning of their work as leaders.

The themes which emerged centered on the importance of trust, specific feedback, and collaboration and were clearly important to building the capacity of the departments' leadership team both individually and as a team.

Chapter 5 discusses the implications of this study and recommendations for further research in transitioning to a distributed leadership model, school culture, collective teacher efficacy, and strengthening instructional capacity through collaboration and teacher-driven leaders due to these findings.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary and synthesis of the findings of department chairs/instructional leaders at a suburban high school that has transitioned from a traditional top-down hierarchical leadership model to a distributed leadership model. Distributed leadership has been explored in the literature; it has been found to have a positive impact on schools in increasing teacher capacity (Leithwood et al., 2007) and increasing student achievement (Spillane, 2006).

This study reveals a complex description of distributed leadership-in-practice as perceived by the ten department chairs serving as middle management in the school's organization. This chapter provides a discussion of the study findings, recommendations, implications for practice, suggestions for further research, and concluding comments.

The chapter finishes by discussing the practical implications of distributed leadership, based on this study, and its contribution to the research, the next steps, and personal reflections.

Summary of the Findings

The five research questions examined the use of a distributed leadership model in a high school setting. The findings for these questions are detailed in this section.

Research Question 1: What factors contribute to an educational institution's transition from a traditional leadership model to a distributed/shared leadership model that fosters high-quality instruction?

The evidence reflects a lack of coherence at the district and school levels that created a sense of urgency for change in the management structure at the school level of the district. The school's decision to shift its management model continues to evolve since its transition three years ago. This shift includes personnel decisions made by the principal to put "the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats," (Collins, 2001, p. 41).

When looking at the survey questions, the responses of the participants indicated a high level of awareness about organizational systems knowledge. Most respondents indicated they consistently or usually employ organizational thinking strategies. Regarding the details of organizational workings such as finances, respondents were less familiar, and the practices of implementing distributed leadership in their departments were mixed. However, all respondents stated that they usually mobilize the right people into action. These collective responses demonstrate that the school's model toward distributed leadership is taking root but still has room to grow and develop at the micro-level—within a department.

For example, 100% of the respondents stated that they consistently or usually recognize multiple layers of organization within the system as a whole. Furthermore, that same percentage consistently or usually understand and work within the rules of formal and informal established hierarchies to complete the task(s). When explicitly asked if they were keenly interested in the larger/bigger picture of how decisions impact a system,

seven of the ten participants replied. Of these respondents, 14% stated they were keenly interested in the larger/bigger picture of how decisions impact a system. However, all seven respondents indicated that they consistently, or usually, recognize multiple layers of organization within a system. That same percentage stated that they understand and value the importance of garnering stakeholder support.

As noted by one of the participants in the study, “Collaboration works best in any situation that allows participants the time to develop a true sense of camaraderie around a shared goal.” This comment reflects a shared commitment by the leadership team. This shared purpose has created a level of accountability. This focus on instructional practices has allowed this leadership role to emerge into an instructional leadership position. “I feel through my leadership, my department has been able to collaborate deeper on vertical alignment and articulation in our subject matter,” summarized one participant.

Research Question 2: How do department chairs approach the ambiguity inherent in this transition?

The challenge to their leadership is made even more so when the leaders have no formal evaluative authority over their team. The shift in role to a teacher-leader can be a welcome boost to the morale of a department that trusts their leader and is based on a shared purpose. This change can also be problematic when a diversity of thoughts, coupled with fixed mindsets, present obstacles to progress. The participants in the case study noted both ends of this leadership continuum.

> The middle management role of Instructional Leader is often a tough place. We have no true control over what our teachers do in their classrooms. We can make

> suggestions, provide support, but in the end, the administrators are the ones the teachers defer to for many issues.

While others see their role in this new organizational model as a driving force towards high-quality instruction, there is also a recognition of the role as a bridge between traditional tasks and the shift to instruction leadership:

> My main purpose of being department chair is two-fold—to be a conduit between administration and my department, but more importantly, to be a driving force of instructional leadership and change. I think this fits perfectly into the school's organizational model as the driving force of change is now coming from below and not from above, 'superintendent' 'Board of Ed.'

Evidence suggests the evolution of this role in a distributed leadership model has also allowed these teachers to evolve as leaders:

> I feel I have improved in regard to soliciting input and feedback from my colleagues, and in regard to involving them in our processes. In the past, I used to come to the department with my plan—and people would sometimes accept it and sometimes freak out. Those that would freak out were vehemently opposed to changing the status quo. They were conditioned, as was I, that it was the department chair's job to determine the path and our process. Now, with the exception of what we have to accomplish related to our standards, I feel that I've figured out how to get almost everyone to contribute to determining our paths and our processes. I also used to feel that I had to be the source of instructional strategies and improvements, and now I've learned to reach out to my colleagues to share what they've learned and tried.

It is notable that in questions related to building the capacity of teachers with that of high-quality instruction for student learning, over 90% of respondents answered that they consistently or usually tied in adult learning with student learning. Similarly, as leaders, over 90% of their responses to leadership questions indicated that they consistently or usually provided transparent and thoughtful inquiry time in support of collaborative learning with their department members.

Research Question 3: How does the culture of the school influence the distributed/shared leadership model?

The climate and culture of a school community can foster innovation and collaboration. Conversely, a school entrenched in past practices and limited expectations can also be a challenging environment in which to enact change. The shift to a new organizational model created challenges for the newly constituted leadership team. Some of them replaced members in their departments who were still working at the school. Those who were willing to take on these teacher-leader roles took a courageous step for the sake of trying to create a more efficacious learning environment for the school community. “It’s sometimes difficult to facilitate members of my team to contribute in professional inquiry and reflection,” noted a member of the leadership team. Another was more direct in their assessment, commenting,

> Each year teachers are afforded the luxury of new students. As a leader of adult learners, 75% of my department return year after year. The positive department influences bring their optimism. The negative influences remove air, life, and ideas from the room. I do not have patience with those adults, and sometimes that impatience shows.

Despite these challenges, 100% responded that they usually mobilize the right people into action. Additionally, 100% of respondents stated that they consistently or usually notice, respond to, and support the encouragement of participants who are feeling vulnerable or unsafe and also, by the same margin, consistently or usually expect and encourage pushback.

Instilling a sense of collaboration in a safe setting is a strong desire of these teacher-leaders. However, when it comes to their efficacy, they are less confident. For example, only 75% of respondents said they consistently or usually identify and disrupt thinking that perpetuates institutional bias. This hesitation in challenging the status quo from years of a traditional organizational structure is also found from a specific survey question that asked participants if they welcome the opportunity to embrace working with those who hold dissenting views. Seven of the ten participants replied to this question, and of the seven, only 14% of those stated that they consistently welcome this opportunity.

The hesitation may be based on the ongoing desire to be "liked" as a way to build a team that shares responsibility. However, it is noteworthy that three years into the organizational shift, only 11% of the members believe they foster adult learners' engagement in order to maximize opportunities to learn. One participant summed this up:

> Having a frank discussion with colleagues who need to hear constructive, but maybe uncomfortable feedback. The way to confront my fear would be just to do it. I avoid such discussions because I am a people-pleaser. I do realize that to be a better leader, I need to give my people frank and honest feedback, even when it might be uncomfortable.

Middle managers in a “quasi-leadership” role, where they have no formal evaluative authority, face this challenge when giving feedback to the members they lead. As one participant noted:

> I am very good at reading people. I always have had that ability. However, when working with others, I’d say that I gravitate toward working with people who have similar views to mine. I should probably embrace working with people with different views in order to push my thinking.

Research Question 4: How does a distributed leadership model impact collective teacher efficacy?

Understandably, the participants in this study valued the collaborative nature and shared purpose of the distributed leadership model. All ten respondents indicated that they consistently, or usually, foster group membership for all participants so that all perspectives are valued. The same percentage indicated that they also take a caring stance to ensure that all participants feel valued. To a great degree, these teacher-leaders worked towards creating a safe environment so that each participant feels safe to risk, learn, and share within their department, with 90% indicating this happens consistently and 10%, indicating that this usually occurs.

While these leadership goals are aspirational, most recognized the challenges in sustaining such an atmosphere consistently. In fact, when specifically asked if they embrace the opportunity to work with those who hold dissenting views, seven of the ten participants responded to this question. Of the seven, only 14% indicated that they consistently embrace the opportunity to work with those who hold dissenting views. Additionally, seven participants responded to the specific question of whether they seek

to understand perspectives different from theirs; of these, 14% indicated that they rarely seek to do so. This dissonance can be seen in one participant's comments:

> I try really hard to make an environment where people feel safe to speak and contribute to discussions. I feel that it is important to have different types of voices in my department. I could work on explaining to other members of my department how that is important to me. Not all my adult learners value everyone's voice as much as I do."

Another participant also reflected on the challenge of sustaining and managing the environment:

> I firmly believe that the adult learners I work with consistently feel safe enough to take risks and share their ideas and that they know I value all of them and care for their well-being and development as an educator. I do realize that I do not always value their perspectives, and that is something that I have continually worked to improve upon. And, while I usually listen very intentionally to what they say, there are times when that is difficult due to the nature of the conversation. When the adult learners I interact with veer off topic or take too long to get to their point, I still struggle to listen intentionally (although I feel I have improved).

Furthermore, one participant summed up the department chair as an instructional leader in impacting teacher collective efficacy:

> IF (capital IF) each department chair is taking what we learn and decide [back] to their respective departments, and encouraging people to take risks and share their results in an environment of trust and constructive feedback, then instruction should improve in all areas over time. I think we are moving in the right direction,

> and have seen growth in my department in this regard, especially in the last few years.

Finally, another respondent noted the correlation between adult and student learners in finding relevance in accomplishing work,

> We continue to build on the instructional work from the prior year. We have a continuity-line [in instructional focus, coherence], and the teachers in our building can see this through-line [coherence]. Adult learners are much like child learners; as long as we tell our teachers why we are doing something, they will do it, so the children are the beneficiaries.

Research Question 5: How does a distributed leadership model impact a school in building and strengthening instructional capacity?

The work in a distributed leadership model, in a school community, transcends the micro-level of department chairs and impacts the macro-level of school-wide organization. The teacher-leaders in this study were less sure of their impact on a school-wide level than within their departments. Nearly a third of the participants (29%) responded that they consistently facilitate a collective or collaborative inquiry process and practices within a system. That same percentage indicated they do so occasionally. As well, 14% of the respondents stated that they consistently pose the right questions at the right time to the right people, whereas 14% stated that they rarely do so.

The inconsistent practice of distributing leadership among teachers, to build their leadership capacity, demonstrates a continued evolution of the model at this school. The leadership group continues to show an emergence of their efficacy as a team and as individual leaders. However, the idea of finding a shared purpose, in this case, high-

quality instruction, has fostered a sense of accountability among teachers and built a greater sense of trust and capacity building at the school, according to the participants' reflections:

> In the past several years, all of our conversation in our Instructional Leadership Meetings has focused on instruction. The shift to instruction is much more comfortable as it is a common bond the entire department share. Knowing all of the work we do surrounding instruction will provide our students with more life opportunities easily directs our DLT and PLC conversations. My role is to facilitate the direction of those conversations and to continue to focus on instruction. It has become easy to remove pieces of the conversation if they do not deal with instruction.

Another leader reflected, "I don't know if it has been the work of the Leadership Team or just our building environment, but I feel like teachers feel very comfortable asking colleagues for either help or their opinion in handling something."

Furthermore, the leadership team's organizational lens continues to expand, as one respondent stated,

> Our instructional leadership team has been away. I am able to see what is happening in other departments. I am able to go back to my department and my own classroom and try other ways to reach students. Sometimes this happens in between topics on the agenda.

Another respondent similarly stated,

> I have a much bigger sense of where my instruction will need to go in the future. Because I have the 'big picture' behind the scenes, it enables me to make changes

to my instruction because I know what the students will need to prioritize in other academic areas, not just my classroom. I also feel like I can ask for insight from other teachers outside of my own department for ideas on how to improve instruction.

Common threads to the recommendations stemming from this study are: determining if the conditions in your organization (school or district) are favorable for a distributed leadership model; creating a collaborative team that shares in the development of a strategic and common vision; creating a trusting environment where leaders can take risks in a culture that values innovation and the building of capacity of the staff.

Interpretation of Findings

The theoretical framework used in this study connects distributed leadership tenets of trust, accountability, shared purpose, and capacity building in a school culture that is focused on building collective teacher efficacy in support of high-quality instructional practices.

Change Theory

A chronology of the events provides a better understanding of the distributed leadership model's evolution at this school. The district underwent its coherence and capacity review in Spring 2017. Concurrently, the school was involved in its decennial accreditation school visit from its accrediting agency. Both program evaluations were consistent in their recommendations that the traditional organizational model, employed at the time, lacked a coherent and consistent vision.

It was evident at the school that without a coherent systems approach, there would not be a shared purpose. That lack of shared purpose cascaded and was manifested in a

lack of accountability and urgency. The current system at that time, or status quo, was not sufficient to support the building of professional efficacy among the teachers and administrators alike. The underlying issue was a lack of trust, in large part, because the top-down hierarchical structure viewed the principal as the face of the organization with the knowledge and information to be shared only with whom they thought appropriate.

A chasm grew between many of the teaching staff and the school administration. The result was enormous power to the system's sole gatekeeper, the principal, and reclusive teachers waiting to be told what to do and how to do it. A false sense of security that did not produce the best thinking or reward risk-takers among the teaching ranks permeated the school culture.

Therefore, the urgency created from multiple reviews by outside agencies was the predominant factor in determining the need for a paradigm shift in the school organization. If the leaders are unwilling to confront systems that are not working and consider making changes that will enhance the organization, then the status quo will continue to result in the old way of doing business. Even though there is nothing wrong with "good," that "good" can, and often does, prevent us from achieving more of our potential. "Good" will keep us satisfied with the current situation, and because of this satisfaction, we may be unable and unwilling to try to achieve something better (Collins, 2001).

Trust and Accountability

The building of trust is an essential component in the evolution of a team in a distributed leadership model. As noted by a case study participant,

> Leadership roles provide an opportunity for teachers to grow professionally, beyond the confines of their classroom and their specific course/content area. It also expands their view from something that can be quite myopic. I think it's important for teachers to understand how our district is organized, and the rationale principals and supervisors have for their expectations. I also think that these leadership roles help instill greater confidence in these teachers, which often manifests in the classroom as well. Additionally, people want to be appreciated and noticed for their skills and efforts. It makes them feel valued.

The concepts of trust and accountability cannot be separated from each other in this model. As one participant stated:

> When teachers are provided leadership roles, they see more of how the school works as a whole. Many teachers think and believe if something is good for their classroom, it should be good for the whole school. What is missing from the discussion is how the one room impacts the entire school community. Teachers who see the entire school, rather than just their room, will be able to assist the whole of the school and impact more students and other teachers.

Similarly, another department chair noted,

> It is important to have leadership roles for teachers to help build accountability for teachers as well as empower teachers to work towards a common mission. I think it can also help to build morale and give teachers a sense of community, camaraderie, and belonging.

Accountability of a trusting team, in an atmosphere to share and collaborate, that is safe (even when things go wrong, we can learn from them) creates a shared sense of

purpose and ultimately builds the capacity of teachers. The leadership moves made by the department chairs were a critical element that fostered building collective efficacy. As one participant surmised, “When I became a department chair, my main goal was to make sure we did not lose speed as a department. We are always a department to rely on, and I wanted to keep it that way.”

Shared Purpose and Capacity Building

Distributed leadership implies a social distribution of leadership where the leadership function stretches over the work of several individuals and where the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders (Spillane, 2002). Furthermore, it implies an inter-dependency rather than a dependency embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility. As one instructional leader noted:

> If the people in my department respect each other, actively collaborate with each other, and become enthusiastic about our path, then I know we are being successful. If our students become better, more enthusiastic learners due to shifts in our practices due to our work, then I’ve been successful. If the teachers in my department are learning about and implementing new strategies, and excited about it, and thanking me for it, then I know I’m successful. It’s all about teaching and learning!

Another participant reflected,

> I feel like I try to create an environment where all voices are heard and feel heard. I don’t think top-down leadership works as well as a shared model. As a building

> leader, I do think I can work on more longer-term planning with my team. It's easy to get stuck in the here and now and ignore planning for the future.

Finally, the instructional leadership team acknowledged a strong desire to continue to build their capacity as leaders through a more direct and frequent feedback loop from the administration. As one department chair reflected,

> I have received positive feedback from my principal and supervisor throughout the school year, but it is mostly 'good job' and the like. I would like more honest feedback about what I can do differently, more effectively as a leader.

Still, others were more direct:

> I do wish I received more feedback about my work as a department chair. I want to constantly be working to get better. No one is perfect, and I want to know in what areas I can improve on. I welcome harsh criticism. I think my administration likes me, and therefore they tend to be nice, but I would love to know their honest opinions of me. I want to grow and get better. To me, the only way to do that is to know exactly where they see weaknesses in me; not where I reflect my own weaknesses, I want to know where they see weaknesses. I want to improve in those areas. I would welcome the specific honest feedback.

Another respondent concurred:

> [The principal] provides feedback, as do our assistant principals. It's not a regular occurrence. Much of it is not specific, however, which would be nice. I would like to know what my strengths are, and what my areas of improvement are, and perhaps how I could work to improve in these areas. We're all usually given the

same feedback in our evaluation, and I understand why that is—but it would be nice to have a conversation specifically designed to focus on my skills.

Limitations of the Study

The department chairpersons are not representative of all teachers in the school. They were chosen through an application process for these positions, and several have replaced faculty who continue to teach at the school. These factors may have contributed to their varying degrees of perceived leadership efficacy within the group, as the climate and culture in each department differ based on the specific nature of the population of teachers they lead. Furthermore, this group was constituted three years ago, during a challenging time in the school and district that led to the decision to change the hierarchical organizational structure at the school to a distributed leadership model.

The timespan and the continuing to evolution of this model may be reflected in the responses given by the study participants. As well, one participant estimated a 25% turnover in teaching staff in their department year to year, which requires the leader to foster the same inclusion of new teachers in building trust, accountability, and capacity each time a new staff member joins the department team. While that percentage is based on the respondent's perception, the reality remains in schools that teacher turnover is real and can pose an additional set of challenges to a distributed leadership model.

Implications

It is clear that involving multiple voices and perspectives in a school setting provides for a more diverse exchange of ideas and often leads to sustainable change in support of shared goals. Multiple studies have been conducted on the power of distributed leadership in education around the world. Changing a long-standing organizational

structure and making a sustainable new model requires courage and relentless pursuit of that purpose. It is essential to consider this when looking at the organizational structure of a school or district and deciding if there is the will to make the change to shift the current operating model.

As Jim Collins (2001) noted in his book, *Good to Great*, "The moment you feel the need to tightly manage someone, you've made a hiring mistake" (p. 56). This point supports the notion that the exercise of leadership is inversely proportional to the exercise of power, another Collins's point. Transitioning to a distributed leadership model is a process that requires a clear and transparent reason for the shift, empowering new stakeholders while supporting current leadership and working to create a shared vision of the organizational model. These components of change were recognized by the participants in this study and summarized by one leader's reflection, "Collaboration works best around instruction. If all of our energy is placed in the instructional framework, our students will be the benefactors. Collaboration does not work when the district or building administration provides specific directives." Furthermore, another participant reinforced the idea of collaboration, transparency, and relevance in support of furthering instructional practices:

> If you are in education and do not believe in lifelong learning, I'm not sure that education is for you as a career. I believe that as teachers, we should always be striving to get better—for yourself and the kids. While I am all about lifelong learning, I sometimes bristle at the PD days that do not translate to improved skills or strategies in the classroom.

The implementation of a distributed leadership model has a myriad of implications for school systems. Each area of a school organization has an opportunity to benefit from a shift resulting in growing the capacity of staff, engaging stakeholders in the sharing of ideas, creating a systematic approach for future leaders to emerge from within the organization, and fostering a sense of urgency among faculty members as they buy into the mission, vision, and norms of a school or district.

A deeper understanding of the implications to a school or district organization considering the shift to a distributed leadership model should include the following considerations. For school districts, there is a powerful opportunity to create a system of leaders from within the existing workforce. A benefit of having an invested workforce that sees future opportunities in their district, and for their professional trajectory, will reduce turnover while building a leadership system from within the existing workforce. Teachers have a greater willingness to actively support and participate in something (such as a proposed new plan or policy) when they are part of the conversations around district strategic thinking and leading.

Similarly, the implications for building principals are extensive. As noted in this study, the shift to a distributed leadership approach has allowed a robust team of leaders to guide instructional improvements and set a collective vision for the school. This shift has created a guiding coalition to lead initiatives and model best practices for other teachers while building the collective capacity and efficacy of the teaching staff. As well, this model empowers the school administration to shift its work towards a more targeted approach centered on instruction and student supports. This empowerment is possible because, in a distributed leadership model, there is an added layer of communication that

provides an avenue for faculty to share their ideas and concerns without an "administrator" presence breaking down the walls of the traditional hierarchical systems. It, furthermore, allows for colleagues, the classroom practitioners, to lead relevant professional learning based on the needs they identify from their work in the classroom. Another implication for school principals is creating of a think tank of trusted, invested employees. These employees place a sense of importance and urgency in the work by their personal investment, thus, contributing to the vision and mission of the school plan.

Distributed Leadership also has significant implications for district administrators, specifically district instructional administrators. As a group of dedicated administrators that, by the nature of their systemic work, do not necessarily have a daily tie to a particular school building, having a pool of teachers to lead the work can be a significant benefit to the district work both in scope and sequence of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Like the principal, the district administrators can have access to this dedicated team that is empowered and invested in leading others in the district in implementing new systems and strategies. Additionally, this group can serve as a conduit between administrative groups—building and district—ensuring a cohesive approach to the work.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the implications for teachers can bring a renewed sense of purpose and involvement for the betterment of the school and the district. An empowered group of teachers who take leadership roles both in the classroom and in the overall school community can lead to a more dynamic workforce. As well, by creating opportunities for upward mobility for teachers, professional staff will be incentivized to invest time, energy, and a long-term commitment to the district. As leaders in their classrooms, departments, and schools, distributed leadership maximizes

the collective wisdom and expertise of teachers as leaders in the building in which to develop the capacity of colleagues and build a collective teacher efficacy regardless of title or years of service.

Recommendations

As discussed in Chapter I, principals are increasingly turning to teacher-leaders to work with colleagues in such roles as instructional coach, lead teacher, mentor, coordinator, and data analyst (Ash & Persall, 2000; Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Reich, 2017). However, a traditional, top-down directional, leadership mindset is still prevalent in many schools (Copland, 2001; Grubb & Flessa, 2006). The traditional organizational system centers on the principal as the pre-eminent leader of the school. In such a traditional model, school administrators and principals will choose not to share vital knowledge with their peers, faculty, or staff members, which drastically impedes school improvement and creates an apprehensive and static environment. In this paradigm school administrators often own the essential organizational and instructional knowledge, and provide it to faculty and staff only when there is no other choice, often in order to preserve their own perceived power or to maintain the status quo. Apart from the challenge to authority and ego, this potentially places the principal in a vulnerable position because of their lack of direct control over individual decisions (Danielson, 2007; Harris, 2003b).

The challenge for school principals and district superintendents is to determine if the school (or district) climate would support the shift to a model perceived as disempowering to those who have traditionally, and over a long period, assumed control and authority in decision-making areas, while ultimately empowering more stakeholders.

Even more important, school (the principal) or the district (superintendent) leader must decide if they are willing to embrace a change from the status quo, the current way the organization operates. Furthermore, what can be missed in this perceived "battle for control" is the notion that more voices at the leadership table can create richer leadership opportunities for administrators. They are surrounded by viewpoints and people of action who are invested in carrying out the shared vision of the school and district. The stakeholders become more engaged, encouraging a greater level of urgency in the work and a deeper level of accountability of the entire school or district organization.

It is recommended that a comprehensive, systematic review of the current organizational model determine if the climate and personnel are willing and have the skillset needed to implement a shift to a distributed leadership model. Furthermore, that in this organizational review, the work of Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (2001), be an essential read.

Is the organization's leader finding results based on the power of their personality and dynamism? If so, Collins (2001) notes that this type of leader is a Level 4 leader. A Level 4 leader often gets results, but the approach is based on their personality and therefore, often garners less staff commitment. Their achievements are often fleeting—the next big initiative that is never sustained beyond the Level 4's tenure. However, Collins's description of a Level 5 leader puts the organization and their team members first and the changes made are collaborative and therefore, often continue to be sustained and grow within the organization even after the Level 5 leader is no longer there.

As part of their critical review, the organization must ask, does the organization have a Level 4 leader? If so, does that personality align with the shift to shared leadership

and decision-making approach? As well, do the mission and vision of those currently in power allow for a realignment towards a new, inclusive leadership paradigm? If, in honest reflection, the answers are "no," then a shift towards distributed leadership is unlikely to take root and will most likely be viewed by the professional staff as just another short-term initiative. This negative view will erode any confidence and trust at the teacher level, that input and leadership are valued or wanted.

As noted in previous research, while distributed leadership does not equate with "delegation," it also does not represent a form of leadership that is so diffuse that it loses its distinctive qualities. It is clear that specific tasks and functions would have to be retained by those in formal leadership positions, but also that the key to successful leadership resides in the involvement of teachers in collectively guiding and shaping instructional development (Harris, 2003a). Additionally, distributed leadership poses the challenge of how to distribute responsibility, authority—and, more importantly—who distributes responsibility and authority. If it remains the case that the principal distributes leadership responsibilities to teachers, then distributed leadership becomes nothing more than informed delegation. A distributed view of leadership "incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilizing staff in the instructional change process" (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002, p. 20).

A teacher leader identified one strong example of the change in the organizational model aligning with the change in role:

> In the past, I used to come to the department with my plan—and people would sometimes accept it and sometimes freak out. Those that would freak out were vehemently opposed to changing the status quo. They were conditioned, as was I,

> that it was the department chair's job to determine the path and our process. Now, with the exception of what we have to accomplish related to our standards, I feel that I've figured out how to get almost everyone to contribute to determining our paths and our processes. I also used to feel that I had to be the source of instructional strategies and improvements, and now I've learned to reach out to my colleagues to share what they've learned and tried.

Delegated leadership differs from distributed leadership. It is recommended that schools understand the difference between the two concepts before determining if a distributed leadership model should be implemented. As Ash and Persall note in their work around formative leadership (2000), delegating who does the work reflects a continuation of the traditional hierarchical leadership model. The implication of delegated leadership is compliance. This is in stark contrast to distributed leadership, which creates a community of empowered leaders encouraged to bring ideas and solutions to the work to shape a plan and a purpose that has shared accountability based on the input from many stakeholders. This recommendation is as important as determining the skill and will of the organization considering a shift towards distributed leadership.

To that end, the recurring theme that emerged and must not be overlooked is trust. Trust is built through finding a shared purpose in the work. It transcends the next new initiative that suffocates teachers and promotes a *just wait it out* culture that siphons innovation and creativity, especially for those newer to the profession. At the same time, it supports *the way it has always been done* and *wait your turn* mindset often entrenched in school organizations.

As Lencioni (2010) notes, trust lies at the heart of a great team, and a leader must set the stage for that trust by being genuinely vulnerable with his or her team members. For any school or district looking to consider a shift to a distributed leadership model, it is recommended that the leaders must ensure a team is formed with the essential tenant of trust as the foundation of its working norms and values. As Collins notes in *Good to Great* (2001, p. 41), putting "the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats," is critical. Furthermore, if the right people are empowered to lead the work of the school community as part of a trusting team, then the likely outcome is a coherent and focused vision that improves the organization towards a common goal.

The transition of the school from a traditional hierarchical model to distributed leadership could be traced back to a lack of coherence among administrators, the result of which disempowered teachers' voice and diminished trust at the school—teacher-to-department head; department head-to-principal; principal-to-district colleagues. Therefore, the work must occur across all levels in order for a distributed leadership model to sustain itself. Even if it occurs in one part of the organization, such as the high school, the relationship between the building and district administrators must share a focus. The teacher-leaders must be part of that collaboration and see the connection in their work at the building level to the work being done at the district level, whether vertical alignment in curriculum or the implementation of shared priorities (such as high-quality instruction). A department chair's comments reinforced this:

> We continue to build on the instructional work from the prior year. We have a continuity-line, and the teachers in our building can see this through-line. Adult

learners are much like child learners; as long as we tell our teachers why we are doing something, they will do it, so the children are the beneficiaries.

A key to the successful implementation of distributed leadership can be found in this study. Specifically, the participants noted that their work produced the most success when they were focused on a shared goal—high-quality instruction. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that focusing on a shared vision, created by the stakeholders on the team, will provide a coherent framework and focus to the work.

The responses from this single case-study are valuable—delving into the perceptions of the teacher-leaders as an instructional leadership team. It is recommended, however, that further studies continue to take into account the perspectives of teacher-leaders and their roles in the school organization using distributed leadership. Distributed Leadership is not a panacea for high-quality instruction, but it does hold many benefits for increasing professional collaboration, building a shared purpose, and fostering a collective efficacy towards that goal.

Finally, it cannot be overstated that the modeling of leadership must continue to come from all levels in the organization in support of creating and fostering a trusting culture that moves the shared purpose forward with urgency in accountability to continue to strive for high-quality instruction.

Conclusions

Traditional top-down structures in school organizations are changing. The role of the principal as sole decision-maker no longer has the same impact it once had. Furthermore, the role of principal from building manager to instructional leader has accelerated the need for a shift in how leadership is viewed in a school organization.

Additionally, as diversity in school personnel increases, and as education becomes more focused on innovation and collaboration that supports instructional practices to meet the needs of today's students better, it is increasingly apparent that a distributed leadership model can create a more cohesive professional environment.

Given the potential benefits in this paradigm shift, schools turn to distributed leadership models to address the need for greater stakeholder engagement and a broader consensus in decision making. The distributed leadership model in this case study engaged the teacher-leaders serving as department chairs with no evaluative authority over the staff they lead. They were earnest in their purpose, leading within their departments and among the school organization as a whole. However, many were still working on finding the best balance between teacher and teacher-leader.

The role that distributed leadership can play in a school organization is transformative. However, this requires ensuring the right people are in the right places to build a team that is trusting, willing to grow in their roles, committed to a shared purpose, and accountable as a collective team to the successes and failures that occur. This model can allow for greater transparency in decision making, no longer having one sole arbiter of the decision-making process. It must, however, be committed to a continuous process that evolves. All stakeholders will adapt to the changing paradigm differently. It can manifest itself in a culture shift that creates a more inclusive organization where all stakeholders feel heard and where many voices contribute to sustainable change towards high-quality instruction.

REFERENCES

Alvoid, L., & Black, W. L. (2014). The changing role of the principal: How high-achieving districts are recalibrating school leadership. *Center for American Progress*. https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/07/01/93015/the-changing-role-of-the-principal/

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen, C. (2006). Introduction to research in education (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Ash, R. C., & Persall, J. M. (2000). The principal as chief learning officer: Developing teacher leaders. *NASSP Bulletin*, *84*(616), 15–22.

Barrett, C., & Breyer, R. (2014). The influence of effective leadership on teaching and learning. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, *1*(2), 3.

Barth, R. S. (2006). Improving relationships within the schoolhouse. *Educational Leadership, 63*(6), 8.

Bass, B. M. (1999) Two decades of research and development in transformational leadership. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *8*(1), 9–32

Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Berebitsky, D., & Salloum, S. J. (2017). The relationship between collective efficacy and teachers' social networks in urban middle schools. *AERA Open, 3*(4), 2332858417743927.

Beycioglu, K., Ozer, N., & Ugurlu, C. T. (2012). Distributed leadership and organizational trust: The case of elementary schools. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 46,* 3316–3319.

Bolden, R. (2011). Distributed leadership in organizations: A review of theory and research. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 13,* 251–269.

Bolman, L. G., and Deal, T. E. (2013). Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership. *National Association of Secondary Principals. NASSP Bulletin, 84*(612), 88. [Wiley. Kindle Edition.].

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational Leadership, 60*(6), 40–44.

Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. (1986). A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century: the Report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, May 1986. Carnegie Forum on Education.

Cauthen, L. (2017). What is systems thinking in education? *The Learning Counsel*. Retrieved from: https://thelearningcounsel.com/article/what-systems-thinking-education

Coburn, C. E., & Russell, J. L. (2008). District policy and teachers' social networks. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 30*(3), 203–235.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison K. (2000), Research Methods in Education, 5th. London and New York: Routledge/Falmer Press.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good To great: Why some companies make the leap and others don't.* New York: HarperBusiness.

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2018). CSDE and ESSA Evidence-Based Spending Guide.

Copland, M. A. (2001). The myth of the superprincipal. *Phi Delta Kappan, 82*, 528–533. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F003172170108200710

Creswell, J. W. (2005), Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Curtin, M., and Fossey, E. (2007). Appraising the trustworthiness of qualitative studies: guidelines for occupations therapists. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal, 54*(2), 88–94.

Daly, A. J., & Finnigan, K. S. (2010). A bridge between worlds: Understanding network structure to understand change strategy. *Journal of Educational Change, 11*(2), 111–138.

Daly, A. J., & Finnigan, K. S. (2011). The ebb and flow of social network ties between district leaders under high-stakes accountability. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*(1), 39–79.

Danielson, C. (2007). The many faces of leadership. *Educational Leadership, 65*(1), 14–19. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.bridgeport.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ777070&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Davidson, B. M., & Taylor, D. L. (1999, April). *Examining principal succession and teacher leadership in school restructuring.* Paper presented at the meeting of the American Education Research Association, Montreal.

Davis, S. H., & Leon, R.J. (2014). Developing a leadership brand: The heart of effective school leadership in turbulent times. *Planning & Changing, 45*(1/2), 3–18.

Day, C., & Harris, A. (2002). Teacher leadership, reflective practice, and school improvement. In Leithwood K. et al. (eds) *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration.* Springer International Handbooks of Education, Vol. 8. Dordrecht: Springer.

Day, C., Harris, A., & Hadfield, M (2000). Grounding knowledge of schools in stakeholder realities: A multi-perspective study of effective school leaders. *School Leadership and Management, 21*(1)*,* 19–42, DOI: 10.1080/13632430120033027.

Day, C., Sammons, P., Leithwood, K., Hopkins, D., Gu, Q., Brown, E., & Ahtaridou, E. (2011). *Successful school leadership: Linking with learning and achievement*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

DeMarco, A.L. (2018). The relationship between distributive leadership, school culture, and teacher self-efficacy at the middle school level. Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs). 2594.

Dimmock, C., & Hattie, J. (1996). School principals' self-efficacy and its measurement in a context of restructuring. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 7*(1), 62–75.

Donohoo, J. (2017, January 9). Collective teacher efficacy: The effect size research and six enabling conditions. [Web log post]: The Learning Exchange. MediaFace. Retrieved from https://thelearningexchange.ca/collective-teacher-efficacy/

DuFour, R. (2004, May). Schools as learning communities. *Education Week, 61*(8), 6–11.

Edwards, T. L. (2007). Classroom teacher perceptions of leadership in the classroom, school, and educational community. (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University).

Eilers, A. M., & Camacho, A. (2007). School culture change in the making: Leadership factors that matter. *Urban Education, 42*(6), 616–637.

Elmore, R. F. (2004). School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Fairman, J.C., & Mackenzie, S.V. (2015). How teacher leaders influence others and understand their leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 18*(1), 61–87, DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2014.904002

Firestone, W. A., & Martinez, M. C. (2007). Districts, teacher leaders, and distributed leadership: Changing instructional practice. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 6*, 1–33. DOI: 10.1080/15700760601091234

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Hattie, J. (2016). *Visible learning for literacy, Grades K–12: Implementing the practices that work best to accelerate student learning*. CA: Corwin Publishing.

Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research: Theory, method, and applications*. London: Sage.

Frost, D., & Durrant, J. (2003). Teacher leadership: Rationale, strategy, and impact. *School Leadership & Management, 23*(2), 173–186.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fullan, M. (2006). *Change theory: A force for school improvement*. Victoria: Center for Strategic Education.

Fullan, M. (2011). *The six secrets of change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations survive and thrive.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Grace, G. R. (2012). *Role Conflict and the teacher*. Routledge.

Giles, C. (2007). Building capacity in challenging US schools: An exploration of successful leadership practice in relation to organizational learning. *International Studies in Educational Administration* (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM)), 35(3), 30–38.

Grissom, J. A., Loeb, S., & Master, B. (2012, November). What is effective instructional leadership? Longitudinal evidence from observations of principals. In *Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management* annual meeting.

Gronn, P. (2005). *Distributed organizational leadership*. Greenwich, CA7 Information Age Publishing, in press.

Gronn, P. (2009). Leadership configurations. *Leadership, 5*(3), 381–394. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715009337770

Gronn, P. (2015). The view from inside leadership configurations. *Human Relations, 68*(4), 545–560.

Grubb, W. N., & Flessa, J. J. (2006). A job too big for one: Multiple principals and other non-traditional approaches to school leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*(4), 518–550.

Hairon, S. & Goh, J. W. (2015). Pursuing the elusive construct of distributed leadership: Is the search over? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 43*(5), 693–718.

Hallinger, P. (2003a). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 33*(3), 329–352.

Hallinger, P. (2003b). Reshaping the landscape of school leadership development: A global perspective. London: Taylor & Francis.

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Education Administration, 49*(2), 125–142.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980–1985. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 9*(2), 157–191.

Hallinger, P., & Heck R. H. (2010a). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School Leadership & Management, 30*(2), 95–110.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010b). Leadership for learning: Does collaborative leadership make a difference in school improvement? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 38*(6), 654–678.

Hallinger, P., Hosseingholizadeh, R., Hashemi, N., & Kouhsari, M. (2017). Do beliefs make a difference? Exploring how principal self-efficacy and instructional leadership impact teacher efficacy and commitment in Iran. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership,* 1–20.

Hammersley, M., and Gomm, R. (2000). *Case-study Method*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Harris, A. (2003a). Distributed Leadership in Schools: Leading or misleading? *Management in Education, 16*(5), 10–13.

Harris, A. (2003b). Teacher leadership as distributed leadership: Heresy, fantasy, or possibility? *School Leadership and Management*, *23*(3), 313–324.

Harris, A. (2004). Distributed Leadership and School Improvement: Leading or Misleading? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *32*(1), 11–24.

Harris, A. (2012). Distributed leadership: Implications for the role of the principal. *Journal of Management Development, 31*, 7–17.

Harris, A. (2014). Distributed leadership. *Teacher: Evidence, Insight, Action.* Australian Council for Educational Research.

Harris, A., & Muijs, D. (2003). Teacher leadership and school improvement. *Education Review, 16,* 39–42.

Harris, A., & Spillane, J. (2008). Distributed leadership through the looking glass. *Management in Education, 22*(1), 31–34.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Rutledge.

Hoeyer K., Dahlager L., & Lynöe N. (2005). Conflicting notions of research ethics: The mutually challenging traditions of social scientists and medical researchers. *Social Science & Medicine, 61*(8), 1741–1749.

Hopkins, D., & Jackson, D. (2002). Building the capacity for leading and learning. In A. Harris, C. Day, M. Hadfield, D. Hopkins, A. Hargreaves, and C. Chapman (Eds.). *Effective Leadership for School Improvement.* London: Routledge, (pp. 84–105).

Huggins, K. S., Klar, H. W., Hammonds, H. L., & Buskey, F. C. (2016). Supporting Leadership Development: An Examination of High School Principals' Efforts to Develop Leaders' Personal Capacities. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *11*(2), 200–221.

Johnson, S. M., & Donaldson, M. L. (2007). Overcoming obstacles to leadership. *Educational Leadership, 65,* 8–13.

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2001). *Awakening the sleeping giant. Helping teachers develop as leaders* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Klar, H. W., Huggins K. S., Hammonds H. L., & Buskey, F. C. (2015). Fostering the capacity for distributed leadership: a post-heroic approach to leading school improvement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 19*(2), 111–137.

Klein, E. (2014). *The effects of teacher collaboration on distributed leadership practice.* (Electronic Dissertation). Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/

Klein, S. B. (2014). The Two Selves: Their Metaphysical Commitments and Functional Independence. Oxford University Press.

Kotter, J. P. (2014). *Accelerate: Building strategic agility for a fast-moving world*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum.

Leithwood, K. A. (1992). The principal's role in teacher development. In M. Fullan and A. Hargreaves (Eds.). *Teacher Development and Educational Change.* London: Routledge.

Leithwood, K. (2006). The 2005 Willower family lecture: Leadership according to the evidence. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 5*(3), 177–202.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of different sources of leadership on student engagement in school. In K. Riley and K. S. Louis (Eds.) *Leadership for change and school reform: International Perspectives.* London: Routledge.

Leithwood, K. A., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning. The contributions of leader efficacy. *Education Administration Quarterly, 44*(4), 496–528.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R. (1999). *Changing leadership for changing times.* Buckingham Press, UK: Open University Press

Leithwood, K., & Mascall, B. (2008). Collective leadership effects on student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *44*(4), 529–561.

Leithwood, K., Mascall, B., & Strauss, T. (2009). *Distributed leadership according to the evidence*. Abingdon: Routledge

Leithwood, K., Mascall, B., Strauss, T., Sacks, R., Memon, N., & Yashkina, A. (2007). Distributing leadership to make schools smarter: Taking the ego out of the system. *Leadership & Policy in Schools, 6*(1), 37–67. doi:10.1080/15700760601091267

Leithwood, K. A., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Education Administration Quarterly, 46*(5), 671–706.

Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team: A leadership fable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass,

Lieberman, A., &. Miller, L. (2004). *Teacher leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Lieberman, A., & Pointer Mace, D. H. (2008). Teacher learning: The key to educational reform. *Journal of Teacher Education, 59*(3), 226–234.

Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (2004). *Teacher leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Liu, S., & Hallinger, P. (2018). Principal instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher professional learning in China: Testing a mediated-effects model. *Education Administration Quarterly*, *54*(4), 501–528.

Lumby, J. (2013). Distributed leadership: The uses and abuses of power. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 41*(5), 581–597.

MacBeath, J. (1998). *Effective school leadership: Responding to change*. London: Paul Chapman Publishers.

MacBeath, J. (2005). Leadership as distributed: a matter of practice. *School Leadership & Management, 25*(4), 349–366.

Mansour, A. (2011). *Building leadership-capacity for sustained school-improvement*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Leicester, England.

Margolis, J., & Huggins, K. S. (2012). Distributed but undefined: New teacher leader roles to change schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, *22*(5), 953–981.

Marquet, L. David. (2012) *Turn the ship around! How to create leadership at every level* (Vol. 34, No. 12). Greenleaf Book Group Press,

Mayrowetz, D. (2008). Making sense of distributed leadership: Exploring the multiple usages of the concept in the field. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44*(3), 424–435.

Mees, G. W. (2008). The relationship among principal leadership, school culture, and student achievement in Missouri middle schools (Doctoral dissertation).

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., Timewell, E., and Alexander, L. (1990). *In depth Interviewing: Researching people.* La Trobe University: Longman Cheshire Pty. Ltd.

Mintzberg, H. (2004). *Managers not MBA.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Mulford, B., & Silins, H. (2003). Leadership for organizational learning and improved student outcomes—what do we know? *Cambridge Journal of Education, 33,* 175–195.

Mulford, B. (2003). School leaders: Challenging roles and impact on teacher and school effectiveness. Paris: A paper commissioned by the Education and Training Policy Division, OECD, for the Activity *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/52/37/33393.pdf

Murillo, P. E. (2013). *Role theory and the enactment of teacher leadership* (Doctoral Dissertation). Western Carolina University, CA.

Myung, J., Loeb, S., & Horng, E. (2011). Tapping the principal pipeline: Identifying talent for future school leadership in the absence of formal succession management programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 47*(5), 695–727.

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., Commission on Public Schools. (2017). *Report of the Visiting Team for […] High School*. NEASC.

Noble, D. (2014). *Distributed leadership in schools: Conditions for success*. Dominican University. CA

Olive, J. (2014). Reflecting on the tensions between emic and etic perspectives in life history research: Lessons learned. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 15*(2). Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung / DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-15.2.2072

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 33*(1), 93–96.

Prelli, G. E. (2018). Educational leaders as Sherpas: How leaders' actions promote collective teachers' efficacy. *Advances in Social Science Research Journal, 5*(1), 304–309.

Punch, M. (1994). Politics and ethics in qualitative research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. CA: Sage

Putman, L. (2012). *Using shared leadership to achieve school improvement goals: A qualitative study of one high school's journey.* (Doctoral Dissertations and Projects) Liberty University.

Reeve, F., & Church, A. (2013). Mentoring through collaborative partnerships until the end of time. *Knowledge Quest, 41*(4), 10–15.

Reeves, D. B. (2008). *Reframing teacher leadership to improve your school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reich, J. (2017, September 18). Who, me? Distributed leadership in schools. *Education Week.* Retrieved from https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/edtechresearcher/2017/09/who_me_distributed_leadership_in_schools.html

Rennie, D. L., Phillips, J. R., & Quartaro, G. K. (1988). Grounded theory: A promising approach to conceptualization in psychology, *Canadian Psychology*, *29*(2), 139–150.

Robinson, V. M. J. (2009). Fit for purpose: An educationally relevant account of distributed leadership. In A. Harris (Ed.), *Distributed leadership* (pp. 219–240). New York, NY: Springer.

Sanjari, M., Bahramnezhad, F., Fomani, F. K., Shoghi, M., & Cheraghi, M. A. (2014). Ethical challenges of researchers in qualitative studies: The necessity to develop a specific guideline. *Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine, 7,* 14.

Scott, J. P. (2000). *Social network analysis: A handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Siciliano, M. D. (2016). It's the quality not the quantity of ties that matters: Social networks and self-efficacy beliefs. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(2), 227–262.

Silins, H., & Mulford, B. (2002). Schools as learning organizations: the case for system, teacher, and student learning. *Educational Administration*, 40, 425–446.

Silins, H., & Mulford, B. (2002). Schools as learning organizations: The case for system, teacher, and student learning. *Educational Administration, 40*, 425–446.

Smylie, M. A., Mayrowetz, D., Murphy, J., & Louis, K. S. (2007). Trust and the development of distributed leadership. *Journal of School Leadership, 17*(4), 469–503.

Sogunro, A.O. (2017). Quality instruction as a motivating factor in higher education, *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(4), 173–184. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n4p173

Spillane, J. P. (2002). Local theories of teacher change: The pedagogy of district policies and programs. *Teachers College Record*, 104, 377–420.

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Spillane, J. P. (2012). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. (2001a). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher, 30*(3), 23–28.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. (2001b). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Institute for Policy Research* working article, Chicago, IL: Northwestern University.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 36*, 3–34.

Spillane, J. P., Healey, K., & Kim, C. M. (2010). Leading and managing instruction: Formal and informal aspects of the elementary school organization. In A. J. Daly (Ed.), *Social Network Theory and Educational Change,* (pp. 129–158). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Spillane, J. P., & Louis, K. S. (2005). School improvement processes and practices: Professional learning for building instructional capacity. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, *101*(1): 83–104.

Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72, 387–431.

The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2019). Olympia, WA. Retrieved from: http://cstp-wa.org/

Torrance, D. (2014). Distributed leadership: Challenging five generally held assumptions. *School Leadership and Management, 33*, 354–372.

Truscott D. (2004). Fieldwork, participation, and practice: ethics and dilemmas in qualitative research. *Science Education, 88*(5), 811–813.

Verma, G. K., & Mallick, K. (1999). *Researching education: Perspectives and techniques*. London, Falmer Press.

Walker, A. (2015). Clones, drones, and dragons: Ongoing uncertainties around school leader development. *School Leadership & Management, 35*(3), 300–320.

Waruszynski, B. T. (2002). Ethical issues in qualitative research. In W. C. Van den Hoonaard (Ed.). *Walking the tightrope: Ethical issues for qualitative researchers*. University of Toronto Press.

Weiner, J. M. (2014). Disabling conditions: Investigating instructional leadership teams in action. *Journal of Educational Change, 15,* 253–280.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(2), 134–152. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/12

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*, 2nd ed. Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*, 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2010). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: The Guilford Press.

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research, 74*, 255–316.

APPENDIX A

Permission from CSTP

Thompson, Fran <fthompso@my.bridgeport.edu> Sun, Jul 14, 10:31 AM

To Nasue

Good Morning Executive Director Nishida,

My name is Fran Thompson and I am a high school principal in Milford, Connecticut. I am currently enrolled as a doctoral student at the University of Bridgeport's Educational Leadership Program.

My research is a single-case study on distributive leadership at a suburban high school. Specifically, I will be examining the role of the teacher leaders (department chairs) and their perceptions on their leadership roles and their capacity to build collective teacher efficacy in both their departments in the school.

In my research, I came across your impressive organization and the CSTP teacher leader self-assessment.

I enjoyed reading about the good work going on at your organization, and it seems to be aligned with the proposal I am working on. I would like to request the ability to use some of the survey instrument, anonymously, on teacher leadership. This will be one data point from a myriad of data, including semi-structured interview questions, accreditation reports, district capacity and coherence documents (all of which are in the public domain) as part of my case study.

If this is something you would be willing to consider and/or need more information from me, please feel free to email me or call anytime. I am reachable by cell phone, 203-592-4841, all the time.

I appreciate your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Fran Thompson

Nasue Nishida <nasue@cstp-wa.org> Mon, Jul 15, 12:03 PM

To me

Hi Fran – Thanks for contacting me, and your research study sounds very interesting. Yes, you may use the Teacher Leadership Framework and/or Self-Assessments, which you can find on our website, and we appreciate the acknowledgment of our work in your final publication.

Best of luck,

Nasue

Nasue Nishida
Executive Director
Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession
Preferred Pronouns: she/her/hers
(c) 360-350-2930
(w) cstp-wa.org
(t) @WACSTP
(i) @wa_cstp

APPENDIX B

Permission from Dr. Weiner

From: Thompson, Fran <fthompso@my.bridgeport.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, June 26, 2019, 9:39 AM

To: Weiner, Jennie

Subject: Request for Survey Instrument Use

Good morning Dr. Weiner,

My name is Fran Thompson and I am a high school principal in Milford, Connecticut. I am currently enrolled as a doctoral student at the University of Bridgeport's Educational Leadership Program.

My research is a single-case study on distributive leadership at a suburban high school. Specifically I will be examining the role of the teacher leaders (department chairs) and their perceptions on their leadership roles and their capacity to build collective teacher efficacy in both their departments in the school.

In my research, I came across your 2011 article, "Finding Common Ground: Teacher Leaders and Principals Speak Out About Teacher Leadership."

I enjoyed reading your study, and it seems to be aligned with the proposal I am working on. I did further research into your work and would like to request the ability to use some of the survey instruments from your dissertation, both anonymous survey and semi structured interview questions, as part of my case study.

If this is something you would be willing to consider and/or need more information from me, please feel free to email me or call anytime. I am reachable by cell phone, 203-592-4841, all the time.

I appreciate your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Fran Thompson

Weiner, Jennie<jennie.weiner@uconn.edu> Thu, Jun 27, 9:31 AM

To me

Hello Fran -

I am very excited to hear that you are engaging in this work. I am very happy to share my interview protocols - they are attached as appendices 2 & 3 in the word document. I am not able to share the survey (it was very brief and focused primarily on demographic information) because I was working on a larger research project to which the data belonged. I did this work a while ago - I have since written more on teacher leaders and principals ability/desire to share leadership if that might also be helpful - I attached those as well. Let me know if you would like to chat sometime, and best of luck on your study!

Jennie

Jennie Weiner
Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership
University of Connecticut
http://education.uconn.edu/jennie-weiner/

Thompson, Fran fthompso@my.bridgeport.edu Sat, Jul 6, 8:30 PM

To Jennie

Dear Dr. Weiner,

Thank you so much. I just came in from a trip away and your email was a most welcome sight!

I appreciate your generosity, and I hope to be in touch in the future.

Have a great summer.

Sincerely,

Fran

Weiner, Jennie<jennie.weiner@uconn.edu> Sun, Jul 7, 6:29 AM

To me

Welcome back and feel free to reach out.

Jennie

Jennie Weiner
Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership
University of Connecticut
http://education.uconn.edu/jennie-weiner/

APPENDIX C

Leadership Self Reflections (based on research, and with permission, from CSTP and Dr. Jennie Weiner)

WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS

Please read and review the attached consent document before proceeding.
Consent Form for Participation in this Case Study

Thank you for your participation in this study. By taking this survey, you are agreeing to your participation and understand your responses will be used in the data collection process for a research dissertation, Transforming Distributed Leadership: A Case Study of Theory in Action by Fran Thompson.

Thinking about your leadership role with adult learners, please assess your leadership in the following areas

1. I foster group membership for all participants so that all perspectives are valued.

   ◯ Consistently

   ◯ Usually

   ◯ Occasionally

   ◯ Rarely

2. I listen intentionally to all participants to fully understand what is communicated.

   ◯ Consistently

   ◯ Usually

   ◯ Occasionally

   ◯ Rarely

3. I take an ethical stance and support others in operating from an ethical perspective.

   ◯ Consistently

   ◯ Usually

   ◯ Occasionally

   ◯ Rarely

4. I take a caring stance to ensure that all participants feel valued.

   ◯ Consistently

   ◯ Usually

   ◯ Occasionally

   ◯ Rarely

5. I create a safe environment so that each participant feels safe to risk, learn and share.

   ◯ Consistently

   ◯ Usually

   ◯ Occasionally

   ◯ Rarely

6. I am aware of and act on the cultural needs and interests of my participants.

   ◯ Consistently

   ◯ Usually

   ◯ Occasionally

   ◯ Rarely

7. What does this tell me about my strengths when working with adult learners? What knowledge and skills do I need to develop to be more effective when working with adult learners?

   [ ]

Leadership Self Reflections (based on research, and with permission, from CSTP and Dr. Jennie Weiner)

WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS

Thinking about your leadership role with adult learners, please assess your leadership in the following areas

8. I use reflection strategically as a tool to inform my practice and improve adult learning.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

9. I intentionally structure dialogue and discussions to further specific learning goals.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

10. I create environments and activities that encourage adult learners to question their assumptions.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

11. I foster adult learners' engagement in order to maximize opportunities to learn.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

12. I encourage collegial inquiry so that participants can transform their practice.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

13. I consider the spectrum of content knowledge and understanding or pedagogy as I plan professional learning opportunities.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

14. I foster mutual responsibility for all group members' learning.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

15. What does this tell me about my strengths in facilitating professional learning? What knowledge and skills do I need to develop to be more effective in facilitating professional learning?

16. I frame my work on the belief that adult learning is interwoven with student learning.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

17. I take the time to notice and appreciate the work of adult learning and convey this to participants.

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

18. I accept and act on constructive feedback in order to model an open mind and improve my practice

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

19. I demonstrate the courage to take risks in order to support the participants' learning.

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

20. I am reliable and follow through on my commitments to participants and the work

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

21. What fears do I have about working with adult learners? What might I do about confronting or challenging my fears?

22. To what degree do I hold the same patience with adult learners as I do my students?

23. I know what to compromise and when, in order to move the work forward.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

24. I read the group using verbal and nonverbal cues to successfully adjust facilitation.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

25. I am willing to admit when I'm wrong or don't know.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

26. I communicate honestly and courageously.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

27. It is my desire to work with adults.

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

28. My passion motivates others

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

29. What does this assessment tell me about how the strengths of my disposition enhance collaborative work? What dispositions do I need to develop to be more effective in collaboration?

30. Where does collaboration work the best? Are there situations in which collaboration is not helpful?

31. I honor and welcome all perspectives.

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

32. I presume positive intentions that all group members are working in the best interest of student learning.

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

33. I value the professional expertise and experience of groups members.

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

34. I foster a sense of community

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

35. What does this assessment tell me about how the strength of my disposition enhances my communication? What dispositions do I need to develop to more effective in communication?

36. What fears do I have about communicating with adults? What might I do about confronting or challenging my fears?

37. I exhibit a belief in life-long learning as a foundation for education.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

38. I demonstrate reflective practice, believing in the improvement of teaching and learning begins with the teacher.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

39. I am committed to supporting the growth of colleagues.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

40. I enjoy the complexity of problem-solving instructional opportunity gaps, welcoming and honoring the contributions of others (parents, students, colleagues).

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

41. What does this assessment tell me about how the strength of my dispositions enhances my understanding of content and pedagogy? What dispositions do I need to develop to deepen my instructional practices?

42. What do I contribute to my learning community and to the broader profession at large?

43. How do I build a community that keeps me professionally relevant?

Leadership Self Reflections (based on research, and with permission, from CSTP and Dr. Jennie Weiner)

SYSTEMS THINKING

Effective Leaders understand that all decisions are made within the context of a larger system.
Each decision made affects the system as a whole. Accountability and credibility is shared. CONTEXT: Think about a goal, plan or project you have completed or want to complete. Think about how the decisions about your project affect the systems within your classroom, team, building, or district.

44. I recognize multiple layers of organization with a system as a whole.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

45. I understand the power structure and how decisions are made in various contexts within a system.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

46. I understand and work within the rules of formal and informal established hierarchies to complete the task(s).

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

47. I understand and value the importance of garnering stakeholder support.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

48. I understand and manage resistance as a legitimate element of working within a system.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

49. I facilitate collective or collaborative inquiry process and practices within a system.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally

Rarely

50. I facilitate collective or collaborative inquiry process and practices within a system.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

51. I pose the right questions at the right time to the right people

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

52. I understand how finances and resources are allocated (i.e. projects, schools, system wide) and can access resources when necessary.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

53. What does this assessment tell me about my strengths when working effectively with in a system? What knowledge and skills do I need to develop to be more effective to work within a system?

54. I set achievable goals considering system constraints.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

55. I create and implement plans to meet goals.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

56. I consider capacity for sustainability when creating goals and implementing plans.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

57. I identify and influence key decision makers

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

58. I craft and deliver effective messages to stakeholders and key decision makers

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

59. I mobilize the right people into action.

Consistently					
Usually					
Occasionally					
Rarely					

60. What does this assessment tell me about my strengths in my advocacy skills within systems thinking? What advocacy skills do I need to develop to become more effective in systems thinking

61. I am attuned to relationships and how they influence decisions.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

62. I have the ability to "read" people and situations.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

63. I embrace the opportunity to work with those who hold dissenting views

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

64. What does this assessment tell me about my dispositions related to systems thinking? What dispositions do I need to develop to become a more effective systems thinker?

65. How would I do when confronted with a dissenting view of my proposal?

66. How would I determine next steps after an initial proposal was rejected?

Leadership Self Reflections (based on research, and with permission, from CSTP and Dr. Jennie Weiner)

EQUITY LENS

For leaders who strive to apply an equity lens, it is critical to continually examine one's own knowledge, skills, dispositions, and assumptions around equity and bias. In order to lead others, there must be a focus on the use of effective facilitation skills and application of culturally relevant and responsive practices. Facilitation skills include listening, questioning, mediation, and the use of culturally inclusive content and data. Application of culturally relevant and responsive practices include combating institutional "isms," ensuring opportunities for all voices, and advocating for equity of access, opportunities, and outcomes.
CONTEXT: Think about your role as a teacher-leader and all of the students that are impacted by your work. Keep that context in mind as you complete this portion of the self-assessment.

67. I am aware of the role that bias, both explicit and implicit, has played in my life and my experiences.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

68. I reflect on how my biases impact my preferences and perspectives

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally

Rarely

69. I intentionally seek opportunities to understand and disrupt my biases,

Consistently

Usually

Occasionally

Rarely

70. I seek varied perspectives to gain a more complete picture of the world and the people around me

Consistently

Usually

Occasionally

Rarely

71. I invite and listen to all perspectives and then weigh them against my bias and values

Consistently

Usually

Occasionally

Rarely

72. I seek to better understand the research on how to bring an equity lens to my work

Consistently

Usually

Occasionally

Rarely

73. What does this tell me about my strengths in reflecting on myself and my identity? What knowledge and skills do I need to develop to be more effective when reflecting on my own biases and identity?

74. I continue to learn about the varied historical contexts and systems of oppression that have created inequities in the educational system and society.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

75. I understand how my own power and privilege impacts those around me.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

76. I understand the difference between equality and equity in an institution.

- Consistently
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

77. What does this assessment tell me about my strengths in understanding race, power, and privilege? What knowledge and skills do I need to develop to me more effective in understanding power and privilege?

78. I am willing to suspend my own agenda and judgement, listen deeply to understand, and hear what is being said

- Consistently

- Usually
- Occasionally
- Rarely

79. I seek to understand perspectives that differ from mine.
    - Consistently
    - Usually
    - Occasionally
    - Rarely
80. I use questions to encourage equity of voice and participation.
    - Consistently
    - Usually
    - Occasionally
    - Rarely
81. I identify and disrupt thinking that enables and perpetuates institutional bias.
    - Consistently
    - Usually
    - Occasionally
    - Rarely
82. I expect and encourage push back.
    - Consistently
    - Usually
    - Occasionally
    - Rarely
83. I encourage risk-taking, reflection, and growth in others.
    - Consistently
    - Usually

◌ Occasionally

◌ Rarely

84. I am able to mediate conversations around sensitive topics without shutting people down

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

85. I am able to notice, respond to, and support the encouragement of participants who are feeling vulnerable or unsafe.

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

86. I apply a critical lens to finding and using culturally inclusive content/ data that invites and encourages discourse

- ◯ Consistently
- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely

87. What does this assessment tell me about my strengths in facilitating with an equity lens? What knowledge and skills do I need to develop to be more effective in facilitating with an equity lens?

Leadership Self Reflections (based on research, and with permission, from CSTP and Dr. Jennie Weiner)

The following portion of this survey has been adapted, with permission, from the work of Dr. Jennie Weiner, Associate Professor, University of Connecticut.

This section asks you for your reflections on your evolution as Department Chair. Please take time to think about the following questions as it relates to your role and your work as a leader in your school.

88. What made you interested in becoming a Department Chair? What were some of the pros and cons you weighed in deciding to take this on?

89. What, from your perspective, is the main purpose of being a Department Chair? How do you feel this purpose fits into the school's organizational model?

90. When you first took on the DC role, what did you hope to accomplish? What specific goals did you have for yourself? Your departments? Your school community of teaching professionals?

91. Why is it important to have leadership roles for teachers?

92. What other ways could your school promote teacher leadership?

93. How did your principal make the purpose of the Instructional Leadership and the DC roles and responsibilities clear to you? To other teachers at the school?

94. In what ways, if any, has your relationship with other school/district administrators, changed since you became Department Chair?

95. In what ways, if any, have your relationship with other teachers (veteran and new) changed since you became Department Chair?

96. In what ways do you feel supported in your work as Department Chair and from whom do you receive that support?

97. In what ways would you like more support in your work as Department Chair? From whom would you like to receive that support?

98. Please describe the type of feedback you have received about your work as Department Chair? From whom do you receive feedback? How regularly do you receive feedback? How helpful is the feedback you receive? How could the feedback you receive be more helpful?

99. How do you define and measure the success of your work as Department Chair?

100. In what ways do you feel you have moved forward in meeting your professional goals as a Department Chair?

101. To date, what has been the most successful part of the Instructional Leadership team you are a part of? What have been the biggest challenges?

102. In what ways do you feel the Instructional Leadership team you are a part of has impacted instructional practices in the classroom?

103. In what ways do you see the Instructional Leadership team impacting instruction in the overall school community?

104. **Thank you so much for your time.**
Before you finish this survey, is there anything else you want to share about your experience as a Department Chair and/or as a member of the Instructional Leadership team at your school?

APPENDIX D

Approval of Research

April 28th 2020

Francis Thompson, Ed.D. Candidate)
Department of Education
College of Engineering, Business and Education
University of Bridgeport

Dear Mr. Thompson,

On *April 28th 2020* the full IRB board approved the following human subjects research:

Type of Review:Initial, Full board.
Project Title:*Transforming Distributed Leadership: A Case Study of Theory in Action.*
Investigator:Francis Thompson Ed.D. (Candidate)
IRB ID:2020-01-30
Funding Agency:None
Grant Title:None
Grant ID:None
IND or IDE:None

To request continuing approval, you are to submit a completed "UB HRP-212 FORM: Continuing Review Progress Report" and required attachments by March 28th 2021.
For study closure, you are to submit a completed "UB HRP-212 FORM: Continuing Review Progress Report" and required attachments by May 28th 2021.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of April 28th 2021, this research expires on that date.

In conducting this research you are required to follow the requirements listed in the *Investigator Manual*.

Sincerely,

Mark H. Pitcher Ph.D.
Director, Health Sciences Inter-professional Research IRB Administrator
University of Bridgeport CC: Linda Paslov, Ed.D.

APPENDIX E

In Vivo, Relational, and Axial Coding Processes

Data Organization & Analysis

RQ 1: What factors contribute to an educational institution's transition from a traditional leadership model to a distributed/shared leadership model that fosters high-quality instruction?

Qualitative Data Excerpts (In Vivo coding)	**Open codes (relationships)**	**Axial codes (themes/ core phenomenon)**
• Questions • learn within *system* understanding work • know *system* • answers • need • ask • better • *ideas* • advocate • *ideas* • need *good people* • working • *system* • *people* come • *think*	• *Collaborative* Conditions • *Stakeholder* input valued • *Shared Purpose* • New Environment (shift) • *Systematic* Change • Clarity • *Instructional Focus*	• **Role Definition** • **Systems thinking** • **Shared Purpose** • **Instructional Focus**

RQ 2: How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in this transition?

Qualitative Data Excerpts (In Vivo coding)	**Open codes (relationships)**	**Axial codes (themes/ core phenomenon)**
• *safe* • care • work heard • adult learners *environment* • feel • think • *value* voices • department • plan • work • practice opportunities department • *Group* • need best • *learn leader* • *professional learning* • thing • know • *leaders* • *group* • feel • One fear makes • working • need concerns • *respect* • Think • control • adult learners • *patience* • *adult learners* • *department* • students • year • *hear* • take work • willing • need • know ideas • *Develop*	• Satisfaction • *Goal* • Self-Efficacy • Confidence • *Respect* • Difficult conversations • Middle Management • *Relationships*	• ***Relationships*** • ***Shared Purpose*** • ***Shared Accountability*** • ***Trust***

RQ 3- How does the culture of the educational institution influence the transition to the distributed/shared leadership model?

Qualitative Data Excerpts (In Vivo coding)	**Open codes (relationships)**	**Axial codes (themes/ core phenomenon)**
• help • allows • *members feel collaboration* • works best will • group • say • situation • feel *everyone* • need student • strength • *communication* always good • adults uncomfortable people feedback • *fear* • time • work • *working system* • people • come think • *ideas* • will • *dissenting view* • question • given • *taken view* • *colleagues* • *changes* • *proposal*	• *Collaboration* • *Buy-in* • No People • *Focus* inquiry • *Trust* • Advocates • *Communication*	• ***Trust*** • ***Common Focus*** • ***Shared Purpose*** • ***Communication / Collaboration***

RQ 4- How does a distributed leadership model impact collective teacher efficacy?

Qualitative Data Excerpts (In Vivo coding)	**Open codes (relationships)**	**Axial codes (themes/ core phenomenon)**
• *improve* • will • need • *believe* • department • Offer • *share* • students • need • *colleagues*	• *Widen Circle* • Participants • *Safe* • *Dynamic Environment* • Listening • *Risks* • *Collective* • Professional • Opportunities	• ***Collective Efficacy*** • ***Trust*** • ***Common Focus***

RQ 5 - How does a distributed leadership model impact a school in building and strengthening instructional capacity?

Qualitative Data Excerpts (In Vivo coding)	**Open codes (relationships)**	**Axial codes (themes/ core phenomenon)**
• *safe* • *care* • *work* • heard • adult learners *environment* • feel • think • *value voices* • *department* • adults • uncomfortable • people • *feedback* • fear • time • *work* • *improve* • will • need • *believe* • Department • *colleagues* • *changes* • proposal	• *HQI* • *Collaboration* • Practice • Modeling • *Focus* • Leverage • *Capacity* • *Coherence* • *Empowering* • *Collegial*	• ***Shared Accountability*** • ***Shared Purpose*** • ***Trust***